The Guardian Weekly

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## Yeltsin faces a dilemma after a defiant Russian parliament again rejects Viktor Chernomyrdin as prime minister

**RUSSIA was at the mercy of deepening economic chaos as the state Duma on Monday refused for a second time to confirm the acting prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, daring President Boris Yeltsin to back down or charge forward into the political unknown.**

**Another rejection would mean dissolution of the Duma and fresh elections, likely to produce an even more hostile parliament to him. Or Mr Yeltsin could submit a new candidate, most likely Moscow's mayor Yuri Luzhkov, whom the left-patriot bloc in the Duma say they would support.**

# Unfettered capital spells global doom

COMMENT
**John Gray**

BILL CLINTON and Tony Blair are insisting that Russia and Asia press on with market reform. They have not understood that economic meltdown in these countries is chiefly a result of anarchy in global markets. Their incomprehension bodes ill for the world, and for their own political futures.

Russia is undergoing its second economic collapse in less than a decade. Since Yeltsin's market reforms began in 1991, production has halved. At least a half of what remains occurs in a barter economy. Tens of millions of people scarcely use money at all.

Much of the population, including that in cities, survives only by growing its own food. After years of "economic modernisation", driven on by relentless pressure from the West, Russia has been reduced to a largely pre-modern, subsistence economy.

Russian agriculture and manufacturing cannot be rescued from collapse without protection from world markets and curbs on the mobility of capital. By vetoing such measures, the West has made a second change of regime in Russia more likely, and ensured that any government that emerges from the current shadow-play in the Kremlin will be one in which anti-Western parties occupy a pivotal position.

By comparison with deepening deflation in Japan, Russia's collapse is — economically speaking — insignificant. Yet Western policies towards Japan have been bungling and hubristic. Japan has been told it must fight deflation by adopting Keynesian policies. But cutting taxes and increasing public spending will not kick-start the Japanese economy. It will merely increase savings and the flow of money abroad.

Western governments have not noticed that, when interest rates are near rock-bottom, confidence has evaporated and capital is free to move anywhere in the world, such policies have as much effect — as Keynes himself put it — as pushing on a piece of string. Under Western pressure, Japan has given up many of the controls it had on the economy. It may now have no alternative to engineering an inflation.

On the surface, China's economy looks in healthier shape than Japan's. Protected by its consistent, well-founded contempt for Western advice, the Chinese government has retained control of the commanding heights. By spurning the West's demands for economic liberalisation it has been able to insulate the country from the worst effects of the depression that has struck its neighbours. Despite that, deflation is gaining hold. China's government will do anything it can to stave off spiralling unemployment and prevent the country following Indonesia and Russia into political chaos. Sooner or later, it will be forced to devalue the currency. At that point, if not before, the yen is likely also to go into free-fall.

All the conditions are already in


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Muscovites queue to buy bread as price rises spark panic buying PHOTOGRAPH: SERGEI TETERIN

# Moscow tastes bitter fruit of rouble's collapse

**Tom Whitehouse in Moscow**

**MOST of Russia's former vassal states are represented on Elshan's roadside food stall in central Moscow. There are tomatoes and aubergines from his native Azerbaijan, melons from Uzbekistan, walnuts from Kyrgyzstan and peaches from Moldova. And from Russia?**

**"Russia has rich soil but produces nothing because nobody wants to work, and everyone steals from each other," said Elshan. "These potatoes are Russian, but, look, they're rotting already."**

**Russia's financial collapse has cruelly exposed its failing agriculture.**

**Imported non-perishable goods — such as vegetable oil, pasta and salt — make up between 60 and 65 per cent of the food products sold in Russia, and up to 85 per cent of those in Moscow. They have been the first to disappear from the shelves as people start hoarding for winter. There is no immediate prospect of them being replaced.**

**Russian companies have stopped buying food abroad. With the rouble still tumbling, it is more profitable to keep any hard currency they did not lose in the banks, rather than spend it.**

**Meanwhile foreign exporters are cancelling food deliveries because they will not accept payment in roubles.**

**Now, even the succulent fruits of the former Soviet Union are in short supply.**

**"Farmers in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan do not want to sell their produce for roubles any more, because roubles are worthless," said Elshan. "But as long as Russians don't mind eating rotten potatoes, they shouldn't starve."**

**The security council secretary, Alexander Kokoshin, tried to reassure people that there was "no danger of a famine" because, as well as the potatoes, there is 18 million tonnes of grain from last year's harvest still in stock.**

**But since it comes only a month after promises that the rouble would not be devalued, ordinary Russians are not convinced.**

**The harvest is down 48.2 per cent on last year. In the far east, the food situation is already officially described as "dangerous".**


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# Murdoch reaches for the red stars

**Guardian Reporters**

THE biggest takeover deal in football history, which could result in the world's most powerful media magnate taking control of the world's richest football club, is to be investigated by Britain's Office of Fair Trading, amid fears of a breach of competition law.

The £575 million ($960 million) bid by Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB for Manchester United would give the satellite TV company an iron grip on the lucrative broadcasting rights to English football's Premier division.

Manchester United and BSkyB have confirmed that they are in negotiations. A final decision on the takeover deal is expected this week.

The UK Trade and Industry Secretary, Peter Mandelson, promised a scrupulous inquiry, as angry Labour MPs and disgruntled football fans called for the deal to be referred to the Monopolies Commission.

Ministers are privately unhappy at having been pushed into a cleft stick: if the Government approves the deal, it risks alienating a substantial section of fans; if it blocks it, it risks losing the support of the Murdoch papers.

Criticism of the deal came as United's share price soared, with £123 million added to the club's value. The drama of the takeover has been heightened with rumours of rival bids from other broadcasters.

Britain's sports minister, Tony Banks, said a monopoly inquiry could be warranted, while football supporter groups claimed that the country's biggest broadcaster of football would have an unfair advantage if it also owned the biggest club.

BSkyB has the rights to televise all Premier League games till the end of 2001, in a deal worth £647 million.


Comment, page 12




*Next week...*

***LE MONDE diplomatique***

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|---|---|---|---|
| Austria | AS30 | Malta | 50c |
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| Finland | FM 10 | Portugal | E300 |
| France | FF 14 | Saudi Arabia | SR 6.50 |
| Germany | DM 4 | Spain | P 300 |
| Greece | DR 500 | Sweden | SK 19 |
| Italy | L 3,500 | Switzerland | SF 3.80 |

# US is acting as judge, jury and executioner

*I THINK* it should be clear now, if ever, after the massive bombing of the pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum and suspected "terrorist" bases in Afghanistan, that the greatest threat to people who reside in some of the poorest countries of the world is the self-proclaimed leader of the free world, the United States. But the majority of the American public cannot be counted on to join the growing multitude across the world opposing US terror, in large measure due to a compromised and convincing mass media. Not a single reporter for the US media dared challenge the US government assertion that:

❑ the Sudanese factory reduced to rubble was in fact manufacturing VX gas;

❑ the US had the authority under international law, or principles of morality, to take unilateral action against anyone it suspected of acting against its interests.

It is obvious to one living in the belly of the beast that this superpower has arrogated to itself the role of judge, jury and executioner in dealing with any group that opposes American domination and exploitation.

Going by the US government's own logic:

❑ Cuba would be justified in bombing areas of Florida that harbour Cuban exiles who have openly plotted to overthrow its government, and even blown up a Cuban airliner in the 1970s;

❑ Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Panama would find legitimacy in destroying the School of the Americas in the state of Georgia that has trained death squads responsible for thousands of casualties in these countries;

❑ Arab countries would be within their rights to target for destruction Israel's biochemical and nuclear facilities.

Weapons of mass destruction are not just the obvious ones aimed at the immediate extinction of life. They are just as much the inhuman sanctions maintained by US and British pressure on the United Nations against the people of Iraq that has led to the untimely death of more than a million children since the end of the Gulf war.

*Dr Sadanand Nanjundiah,*
*Central Connecticut State University, New Britain, Connecticut, USA*

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*THE* American press does not point out that in one day of firing missiles the United States spent about one-and-a-half times the cost of four years of Kenneth Starr's investigation of Whitewater, Travelgate, misplaced FBI files, fellatory adventures, etc.

There is the naive belief that exterminating a few terrorists will resolve the confrontation of the Muslim and post-Christian worlds, yet terrorism is begotten when all peaceful means appear hopeless.

If the further colonisation of the West Bank were ceased and the Oslo accords revived, if the Americans who shot down the civilian Iranian airplane in the Gulf (when we were allies of Saddam Hussein) were tried for their crime as well as the avengers who shot down the airplane over Lockerbie, if Iraq had a hope of regaining sovereignty, the call for terror would grow dim. In this context note the nearly complete end of terror in Ulster.

*Richard Bates Harris,*
*Leominster, Massachusetts, USA*



## Don't shoot the aid givers

*WE* cannot agree with Kevin Toolis (Africa's famine is very big business, September 6) that the relief effort exacerbates the suffering of the Sudanese people. Hundreds of thousands of people in south Sudan have been, and will be, saved by the aid delivered to them.

There is no credible evidence that the war in Sudan — over more issues than just religion — would end if humanitarian aid were suspended. There are serious challenges to the delivery of aid in conflict, as Mr Toolis points out, but he does not take proper account of the work that Oxfam and other responsible aid agencies have been doing for many years to assess the net benefit of our humanitarian aid programmes in Sudan and in other war zones.

Where Oxfam delivers aid in emergency situations, we also seek to address the root causes of the problem. In Sudan, Oxfam and other agencies have appealed for serious political engagement to end the war. Oxfam has been lobbying the UK government to play a more proactive role in seeking a political solution ever since we mounted an emergency response in southern Sudan in the 1980s.

Providing relief to starving people, striving to ensure that the relief reaches the people who need it and pressing the international community to find peace seems the most responsible solution.

*David Bryer*
*Director, Oxfam*

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*KEVIN TOOLIS,* in his thoughtful analysis of a very difficult and emotionally charged issue, brings to light a key problem surrounding aid and development. His suggestion that non-governmental organisations are part of the problem rather than the solution — that it is a question of "institutional survival" — agrees with my own experience as a volunteer with a Canadian NGO in Indonesia and Vietnam.

Over a three-year period with this organisation, my husband and I found that contrary to its mission statements and glossy promotional publications, the NGO did not care about the people it was claiming to help. Nor was it concerned about carrying out the tasks stated in reports to the Canadian donors. Instead, it was more concerned with increasing its numbers, not only to justify its existence but also to ensure its continuity.

By accomplishing in reality what it claimed in theory, the NGO would simply be working toward its own demise. That is not good business sense and, as our regional director often told us, "Development? It's just another business."

*Saira Fitzgerald,*
*Ottawa, Ontario, Canada*

## NZ voting system sound

*IT WOULD* be a mistake for New Zealanders to reject their new electoral system — mixed member proportional (MMP) — because it has resulted, first time around, in a collapsed government. The discredited coalition brought together two discreditable leaders, with nothing in common but naked ambition. Jenny Shipley — a woman who makes Margaret Thatcher look like Mother Teresa — seized the leadership of the National party by chicanery, organising an internal coup in the absence of the then prime minister.

Winston Peters, in order to become her coalition partner, burned almost every plank of his New Zealand First party's platform, including a vow that he would never work with National.

Far from proving that there is some fatal flaw to MMP, the auto destruction of this pair of strident egotists suggests that the system has a built-in fail-safe. It is reasonable to expect that the lesson will not be lost on future MMP governments.

*Paul Winstanley,*
*Palmerston North, New Zealand*

## Russia needs a breathing space

*WE ARE* witnessing the last stage of an extraordinary progression in Russia. Within one century feudalism, communism and capitalism have all collapsed — the demise of the first two causing worldwide upheaval.

Despite an educated and creative people and huge amounts of natural resources, any value created by these is being drained away through both official financial channels and the black market. The Western bankers must give the Russian economy breathing space. It's people must be allowed to retain the value they create by the suspension of interest payments on current loans, and by limiting the international tradeability of the rouble and the use of the dollar in their economy.

This will allow them to make use of local production networks and barter, so that monetary transactions benefit those whose labour and skills create them.

That this model would also be popular in the West may be the reason bankers won't wear it. Our leaders must show the way out of this mess.

*(Dr) Diarmid Weir,*
*Edinburgh*

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*WHEN* President Ronald Reagan and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher led the refusal of help to Mikhail Gorbachev, at a summit meeting some years ago, a Swedish diplomat faced the television cameras and said that "the West will come to rue this day". He seemed quite ill from the shock at the enormity of it. What was behind this foolhardy decision to deny Gorbachev aid for Russia?

It was a humiliating end to his tenure as a leader and of a sanely guided course for Russia. Why did no one pay attention then? Everyone could have been saved from the present unholy mess. It did not suit some nations for Russia to be revived, but why do the Europeans not think for themselves?

*Marina Grut,*
*London*

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*COMMUNISM* and capitalism have both failed the Russian people miserably, and now it seems that Russia is in danger of sinking into anarchy.

Could the co-operative movement in the West, which is based on firm democratic principles, be of help in establishing Russia as the world's first democratic co-operative state?

*(Rev) John Webster,*
*Hove, East Sussex*

## Briefly

*AT THE* end of a week of plunging stock markets, and concerns over the value of my mutual funds, Tom Stoddard's photograph of the starving Sudanese child and the rich man (August 23) brought a dreadful sense of guilt, shame and despair to me.

The expression on the child's face still leaves me wondering what the child is thinking. This bothers me tremendously. I have been exposed to many similar photographs, but this time Tom has managed to capture something very profound. Congratulations would be inappropriate, but my mutual fund anxieties are of much less concern to me now.

*Malcolm Farren,*
*Vancouver, BC, Canada*

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*I AM* amazed that no organisation with an interest in road safety has attempted to capitalise on the fact that Princess Diana's bodyguard survived the collision in the tunnel in Paris because he was wearing his seat belt, while the princess and her companion, Dodi Fayed, who were not wearing belts, died as a result of their injuries.

A positive "belt up" message would be, I believe, the most appropriate way of remembering this young woman.

*Michael Bowen,*
*Thatham, Berks*

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*CRITICS* of the new measure to allow a policeman's opinion, unsupported by any evidence, to be sufficient to convict have missed a clear advantage to the many victims of miscarriage of justice in the past 25 years.

Sure, they would still have been framed by the police, but the new system would mean there was no need to beat them first to extract a confession.

*Garry Allen,*
*Brighton, East Sussex*

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*IN* "Gays get a bashing" (August 16) Martin Kettle wrote that Luxembourg (440,000 inhabitants) was the smallest country in Europe.

What about Monaco, Liechtenstein, Andorra, San Marino and the Vatican?

*Arthur Biewer,*
*Luxembourg*

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*MAYBE* O J Simpson wasn't available to speak at the Guardian International Television Festival (September 6). The spectacle of a woman convicted of the manslaughter of an eight-month-old child being invited to contribute to the debate was distasteful to say the least.

*Julia Murphy,*
*London*

*The* **Guardian Weekly**

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# Ceasefire in Congo 'agreed'

**Andrew Meldrum in Victoria Falls**

CONGOLESE rebel leaders and forces supporting the government of President Laurent Kabila reached a breakthrough in peace talks on Monday, according to the Zambian president, Frederick Chiluba, chairman of a six-country African summit.

He refused to give details and would not comment on whether a ceasefire had been agreed, but said there was a deal. "All of us have agreed," he said.

One of the negotiators told Reuters news agency that the draft agreement proposed an immediate ceasefire and a troop standstill, then further talks to reach a lasting settlement.

Zimbabwe's president, Robert Mugabe, who called the summit and who has aircraft and 3,000 troops in Congo in support of Mr Kabila, left the conference room smiling broadly and holding hands with Congo's leader. Other participants said the agreement was satisfactory.

The two presidents were joined in Victoria Falls by presidents Sam Nujoma of Namibia and Jose Eduardo dos Santos of Angola, whose troops are also supporting Mr Kabila. On the other side were the presidents of Uganda and Rwanda, who are supporting the rebels.

Mr Chiluba said all the parties had remained in the talks until agreement was reached, discounting reports that the rebels had left early.

The rebels, who were excluded from meeting face-to-face with the heads of state, had threatened not to attend, saying Zimbabwe was not neutral ground. As a compromise the talks were chaired by the Zambian president, who has not taken sides in the conflict.

Unlike the red-carpet treatment given the presidents, the rebels had to go through standard customs and immigration procedures when they arrived in Zimbabwe, and then had to telephone for transport to the conference hotel.

In the six-member rebel delegation was Bizima Karaha, Mr Kabila's former foreign minister, who defected to the rebel side last month, complaining of the Congo leader's lack of respect for democracy.

Uganda and Rwanda were especially anxious for a ceasefire and the return of prisoners. They have reportedly had large numbers of their troops captured in western Congo.

The next issue will be the withdrawal of all foreign forces. The last but most difficult question is how to resolve Congo's internal problems. The South African president, Nelson Mandela, has called for quick multiparty elections and a government of national unity.

● Scores of Tutsi civilians have been killed by government troops and buried in mass graves in Congo's third largest city, rebel leaders and witnesses said.

Residents of the northeastern city of Kisangani said the killing began immediately after Tutsi-led rebels in the east of the country launched their revolt against President Kabila on August 2.

"There are several mass graves and people have told us they saw many bodies thrown into the river," said a senior rebel official, Kambale Bahekwa.

Officials showed journalists two graves with an estimated 100 corpses, mostly men allegedly shot by Mr Kabila's army before Kisangani fell to the rebels on August 23.

**SOME 2,000 students massed outside Indonesia's parliament on Monday to demand President B J Habibie's resignation, after tearing down the compound's gates, *writes John Aglionby in Jakarta.***

**After a tense standoff, hundreds of riot police and troops on guard behind the gates allowed 2,000 students to advance about 20 metres into the sprawling grounds, before blocking their way to the parliament building with a heavy cordon of riot shields.**

**Chanting anti-government slogans, the students demanded that Mr Habibie should resign because of his handling of the economic crisis.**

**After darkness fell most of the students dispersed, but about 300 remained, singing patriotic songs, faced by hundreds of troops.** PHOTOGRAPH: ENNY NURAHENI

## Iran rules out strike against Taliban forces in Afghanistan

**David Sharrock**

THE threat of a war in the Middle East receded last Sunday when Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, ruled out an invasion of neighbouring Afghanistan.

The ayatollah, commander-in-chief of Iran's 500,000-strong armed forces, said there would be "no confrontation with Taliban", the Tehran Times reported.

[illegible] two countries since 11 Iranian diplomats were allegedly killed when Taliban fighters overran the Afghan opposition stronghold Mazar-i-Sharif last month.

Tehran accuses the Taliban of seizing 47 Iranians when its forces captured the northern city on August 8, but the Taliban militia says it knows nothing about the 11 diplomats, and has freed five Iranian truck drivers.

A member of an Iranian delegation who travelled to Afghanistan last week said their mission was only to find and retrieve the remains of the diplomats.

The Tehran Times report was the first account of the ayatollah's remarks, which the newspaper said were made on Thursday last week.

The Iranian government is dominated by Shia clerics. The Taliban, who control most of Afghanistan, follow a purist interpretation of Islam's dominant Sunni faith.

The prospect of an Iranian military strike against the Taliban appeared to rise last Saturday when the state-run Tehran radio said Iran had the right under international law to take all action necessary in connection with the diplomats' disappearance.

Iran sent 70,000 troops to its northeast region last week for [illegible] border. It said the bulk of them would remain in the area.

Hardline conservative publications in Iran support a strike, while most moderate dailies advocate self-restraint.

The Tehran Times dismissed claims that tension on the border could lead to open conflict. "Despite the fact that Iran is quite ready in all respects to meet any eventuality, pundits here do not foresee any military clash with Taliban," it said.

● The Taliban militia massacred thousands of Afghan civilians after capturing Mazar-i-Sharif from opposition forces last month, Amnesty International said last week.

Its report quoted the testimonies of witnesses and survivors who said the victims were mostly from the Shia Hazara community, one of the many ethnic minorities living in the country's north.

## Former Rwandan PM gets life sentence for genocide

**Chris McGreal in Arusha**

AN INTERNATIONAL court sentenced the former prime minister of Rwanda to life imprisonment for genocide last week, describing his crimes during the 1994 slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Tutsis as "widespread and atrocious".

Jean Kambanda, the first man to be sentenced under the 1948 Genocide Convention, written in the [illegible] guilty in May to six counts of genocide and crimes against humanity.

The court brushed aside a plea from his lawyer for a sentence of just two years because Kambanda had co-operated with prosecutors immediately after his arrest in Kenya last year, and had agreed to testify against former members of his cabinet and senior army officers awaiting trial by the United Nations tribunal.

The defence said Kambanda, aged 43, wanted to be free to contribute to the "healing process" in Rwanda. But while acknowledging his co-operation, the judges said his participation in "the crime of crimes" was too heinous to impose anything but the maximum sentence.

The judges were sceptical of claims that he was deeply remorseful. They noted that he failed to offer a public apology when invited to address the court. Nor did he show sympathy for the victims. Kambanda's lawyer said he would appeal against the sentence.

With the exception of the de facto army chief Theoneste Bagosora, Kambanda is the most senior official connected to the genocide in the tribunal's custody. Thirty-five people have been indicted by the court but so far only Kambanda has pleaded guilty.

Earlier last week the tribunal [illegible] Jean-Paul Akayesu, guilty of various genocide charges and set sentencing for later this month.

Rwanda has more than 100,000 people in prison accused of taking part in the massacres, and in April began executing those condemned by its own courts to death by firing squad. The trials and executions have been condemned by international organisations.

Kambanda: pleaded guilty

## The Week

**THE ruling Malta Labour party was swept from power less than two years after taking office. The leader of the victorious Nationalist party, Eddie Fenech Adami, is committed to putting the island back on course to join the European Union.**

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**PAKISTAN, firmly in the grip of Islamic tensions, severe economic crisis and lack of confidence in the country's leaders, was reported to be teetering on the brink of a military coup.**

Le Monde, page 13

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**BURMA'S main opposition party, the National League for Democracy, said that the military government had detained 110 of its members to thwart its plan to convene a "People's Parliament" this month.**

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**POLICE seized cocaine worth an estimated $165 million from a Spanish-registered catamaran when it arrived at Kinsale, Co Cork, making it the biggest drugs haul in Irish history.**

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**TWO US air force helicopters, whose crews were believed to be using night-vision goggles, crashed in the Nevada desert during a training exercise. All 12 people aboard were killed.**

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**MORE than 100 people were arrested in 12 countries as police acted against the Wonderland Club, described as one of the world's most sophisticated Internet paedophile rings.**

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**ANTOINE LAHD, the leader of the Israeli militia the South Lebanon Army, freed Soha Bishara, a Lebanese woman who had spent 10 years in prison for shooting him in an assassination attempt.**

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**FRANCE'S interior minister, Jean-Pierre Chevénement, who is in a coma after suffering a heart attack during surgery, was said to be improving.**

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**OFFICIALS from 33 countries stretching from Belgium to Japan met in the Azeri capital, Baku, to give a [illegible] recreate the historic Silk Road linking Europe with Asia.**

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**A MILAN businesswoman was freed by kidnappers after being held hostage for nine months. "I was away for 266 days and I counted every one of them," said Alessandra Sgarella.**

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**A US rower, Tori Murden, abandoned her attempt to become the first woman to cross the Atlantic alone.**

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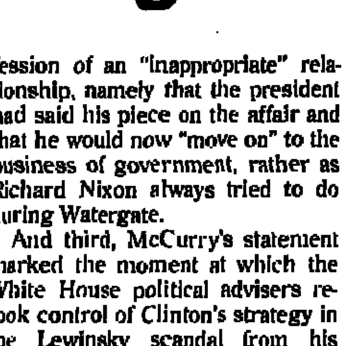
**AKIRA Kurosawa, the Japanese director of masterpieces such as Seven Samurai and Rashomon, died of a stroke at his home in Tokyo aged 88.**

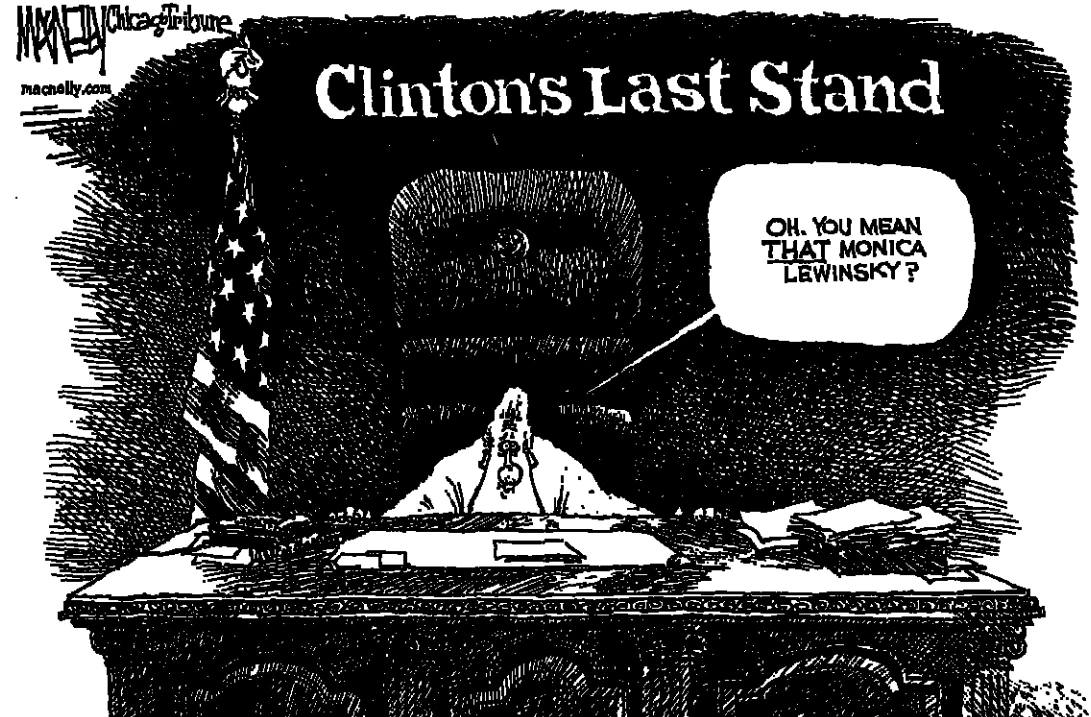
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GUARDIAN WEEKLY
September 13 1998

# Clinton appears an ever sorrier figure

WASHINGTON DIARY
**Martin Kettle**






BILL CLINTON'S visit to Ireland proved to be a turning point, but not the one for which the president might once have hoped. It was certainly not a turning point in the affairs of Ireland, but it was a turning point in what has now become a battle to save the Clinton presidency in the face of the Lewinsky scandal.

This was not, however, because Clinton said "sorry". In a formal sense the use of that word was new, it is true. But, as any parent knows, when a child finally says sorry the next job is to persuade the child to mean it, and then, most important of all, to be able to say it spontaneously, without nagging. Clinton has not got that far yet.

Nevertheless the Dublin exchanges were a turning point, and the person who marked the turn was not Clinton himself but his press spokesman, Mike McCurry. During the course of a tense set of exchanges with reporters following the Clinton "sorry" comment, McCurry said the following words: "I think the president clearly does not believe that one conversation, one statement, one speech, is going to be sufficient in addressing this matter the way he wants to. And he intends to keep addressing it both personally and — to the degree he needs to — publicly, as he sees fit."

This important statement is a change of policy on several counts. First, it reverses the White House's long-held position that it must maintain silence on the private matter of the Lewinsky relationship. Second, it abandons the pretence that was central to Clinton's August 17 confession of an "inappropriate" relationship, namely that the president had said his piece on the affair and that he would now "move on" to the business of government, rather as Richard Nixon always tried to do during Watergate.

And third, McCurry's statement marked the moment at which the White House political advisers retook control of Clinton's strategy in the Lewinsky scandal from his lawyers. They did so because Clinton's tenure of office is now genuinely at stake. This has become, once again, an overwhelmingly political battle, not a legal one, and Clinton will confront it as often "as he sees fit", to quote McCurry.

The battle to save the Clinton presidency has now been joined. This has happened for reasons that were not all widely foreseen. At the heart of the crisis, however trivial one may think that the Lewinsky matter may be, is the president's inability to tell the truth and say sorry when he ought to, a subject that is grippingly addressed at immense length in Professor Stanley Renshon's prescient book, High Hopes: The Clinton Presidency And The Politics Of Ambition, published earlier this year.

A letter-writer to the Washington Post last week, one Roger Pogge of Hampton, Virginia, put Clinton's problem in a nutshell. In the parts of the president's testimony in the Paula Jones case that have so far been published, Pogge pointed out, Clinton used the words "I don't remember" 71 times, "I don't know" 67 times, "I'm not sure" 17 times, and "I have no idea" 10 times. In fact the transcript contains no fewer than 267 lapses of a presidential memory that is in other respects legendary in its accuracy.

Yet, as we now know, Clinton at that time knew perfectly well who Monica Lewinsky was, what he did with her and where, and she to him. Those 267 lapses of memory, we can safely say, were tactical. Neither in the Jones deposition in January nor in the testimony to Kenneth Starr in August — nor in the pivotal broadcast that followed — did Clinton tell the truth.

It was that deep sense of failing to face up to reality that pushed Senator Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut to make the speech in the Senate last week that may come to be seen as the turning point in this affair. As the world now knows, Lieberman is politically a Clintonian — he is what used to be called a rightwing Democrat, a man who has no intellectual problems tacking to the centre in search of consensus.

Unlike Clinton, however, Lieberman tacks with the assistance of a conservative moral compass in good working order. That was what made his attack on Clinton so devastating. It was not a political assault, nor partisan, nor based on big policy issues.

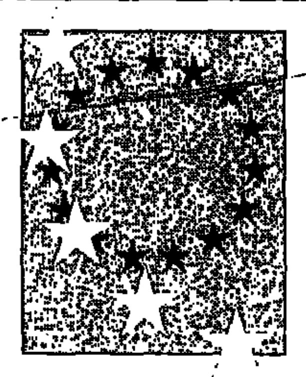
What Lieberman delivered was a simple and dignified set of judgments about Clinton's personal behaviour that were individually and cumulatively devastating. It was not inappropriate to have the relationship with Lewinsky, he said, but "immoral". And it was "harmful" because it gave a bad moral lesson to families and children. Clinton had many opportunities to repair the damage, Lieberman said, but he had squandered them.

Lieberman's speech deserves to be read carefully and often, and may come to have a certain iconic status in American public life before this whole business is done. Yet for all the carefully judged use of moral language and the threats of Senate censure that it contained, it is possible that its most damaging hit was in one of the speech's longer and less morally anchored phrases: "He failed to clearly articulate to the American people that he recognised how significant and consequential his wrongdoing was and how badly he felt about it."

Clinton's great fault, according to Lieberman, was that he got the August 17 television address badly wrong. It was not his moral failings that have landed him where he is today, but his political misjudgments in dealing publicly with those failings. Clinton was a great communicator who failed to get the message right. Clinton is not the first man or the first politician with an instinct for not telling the truth. But what has let him down when it matters has been a much more public failing — his inability to strike the right note. He has made apology seem merely a tactic.

**Washington Post, page 15**

# Asylum rights put through a Viennese grinder



**Europe this week**

Martin Walker

WHEN the European Commission completed a brisk review of the impact of the Russian crisis last week, it gave itself a pat on the back. The economic effect would be marginal in the short term, since Russia takes less than 4 per cent of European Union trade. Moreover Europe had become a safe haven of stability in which even once wobbly currencies such as the Italian lira and Spanish peseta were now secure in the armour of the single currency.

Nobody in official circles is crass enough to use the phrase "Fortress Europe", although it seems evident that the Europeans and North Americans are hoping that their two rich white clubs will be spared the grief afflicting Asia, Russia and Latin America. But Fortress Europe has a second context, defined by the looming problem of refugees.

There are now about 300,000 refugees in Kosovo, many of them living in the woods and dreading the coming of winter. In Sicily the new camps built for refugees from North Africa and Albania have already seen serious riots. In Turkey EU officials have begun negotiations about EU-financed and Turkish-run camps for refugees from Iraq and elsewhere in the region. And Europe is already looking nervously to the east, wondering what new drift of peoples might be trudging their way this winter from the Russian financial catastrophe.

One of the most sobering developments of the week is that after the humanitarian fatigue that followed the arrival of more than 500,000 refugees from the Bosnian wars, Europe is indeed planning to build moats and walls to keep them out.

Europe is pressing ahead with a plan to transform its current policies on refugees and political asylum, and remove their right to permanent settlement, despite outrage from civil liberties groups and Greens in the European Parliament who say that it means "the end of the Geneva Convention".

The plan has been drafted by the interior ministry of Austria, current holder of the EU Presidency, and has met with initial approval in principle by the other member states. It starts from the principle that the Geneva Convention, designed to protect individuals fleeing political persecution, now covers only a small minority of refugees.

The new plan has been designed to meet sudden emergency influxes, such as those from the wars in Bosnia, Kosovo and Kurdistan, and proposes a four-stage policy designed to give short-term and temporary protection. The essential feature — which breaks with the principle of the Geneva Convention — is that it does not give refugees the right to settle in the EU.

The first stage would be to try to handle the emergency—on the ground, either by peace-keeping or through local "safe zones" in the afflicted country. This is what is now being proposed in Kosovo, where the Serbian government is suggesting that the United Nations, charities and NGOs run four humanitarian "hubs", under the eye of Serbian security forces. The International Crisis Group (ICG) tried to warn EU officials at a meeting in the European Parliament last week that this would be as wicked as it was impractical.

"It's crazy to think that Kosovar woman and children will put themselves under the protection of Serbian forces who have been shooting their husbands and fathers," said the former United States assistant secretary of state, Morton Abramowitz, a leading figure on the ICG.

The second stage of the Austrian plan would be to keep refugees in the region, if necessary by using EU funds to provide food, medical care and "temporary" refugee camps. (This policy was adopted for Palestinian refugees from Israel in 1948, and the camps are still in place 50 years later.)

The third stage would be, in the worst case, to grant temporary sanctuary in an EU country, with all EU member states contributing to the costs. This temporary refuge would not include the right to work, nor the right of residence. The fourth stage would be mandatory repatriation of the refugees to their homelands as soon as circumstances permit.

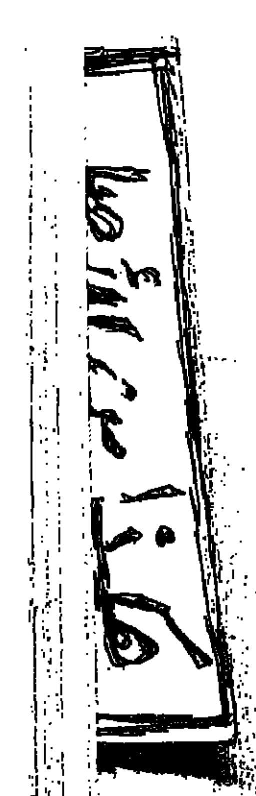
"This proposal is an unprecedented attack on the principles of international law and human rights," said Magda Aelvoet of Belgium, president of the Green group in the European Parliament. "This clearly is in contradiction with the Geneva Convention, which established an individual right for asylum."

"We have to recognise that circumstances have changed since the cold war era of 1951, when the Geneva Convention was signed," said Manfred Matzka, director general for migration in the Austrian interior ministry and author of the plan. "Most refugees are not these days individuals who flee political persecution, but they flee from civil wars like Bosnia, or from violent fundamentalism like Algeria. The Geneva Convention does not give us a proper instrument to deal with this kind of crisis, and we need one. Our proposal does not do away with the Geneva Convention, but rather complements it."

The British Home Secretary, Jack Straw, and other EU home affairs ministers are to discuss the Austrian proposal on September 24. The Greens meanwhile are trying to rally support for a declaration against the scheme by the European Parliament. This looks unlikely, since neither Christian Democrat nor Social Democrat MEPs from Germany — their eye on the September 27 general election — want to be seen as "soft" on refugees. In Germany, which took more than half of Europe's refugees from Bosnia, refugees are a divisive political issue in the way that they were in Britain when the Uganda Asians were admitted in the early 1970s.

"The worst feature of this is that were such a policy to be tried in any single member state — in Austria or Britain or Germany — the civil liberties groups and the churches and the national conscience would not permit it," said the German Green leader and MEP Claudia Roth. "But by making it a European policy, this kind of opposition can be side-stepped."



**The Week in Britain** James Lewis

## Teacher union welcomes move to a meritocracy

THE IDEA that teachers should be paid according to their classroom competence has, surprisingly, been welcomed by the biggest of the teaching unions, the National Union of Teachers, which had been expected to oppose the latest plans by the Education Secretary, David Blunkett.

A green paper is expected shortly, which will aim to reward successful teachers by removing the £23,000 pay ceiling on the main classroom grade for those without additional responsibilities. Mr Blunkett wants to make several hundred million pounds available on top of the normal annual pay rounds, for distribution according to merit, starting in 2000.

A poll by the NUT showed 70 per cent of its 12,000 members to be in favour. Their expectations, however, may not match those of Mr Blunkett. The teachers believe that they should be rewarded for taking training courses or qualifying for promotion, whether or not they take on managerial responsibilities. The Education Secretary has something more sophisticated in mind: meeting performance standards and personal targets, "including those related to pupil performance". The union is adamantly opposed to ideas for linking pay to pupils' performance, and will vote against it at a special conference this month.

Teachers' unions were united in condemning the "baseline assessments" that are being applied to four- and five-year-olds as they start school this month. They will be tested on whether they can recognise numbers up to 10, recognise letters, write their name, recite at least one nursery rhyme, hold a book the right way up and, perhaps most importantly, sit still for 10 minutes without supervision.

The Government's idea is that the tests will identify children's strengths and weaknesses and assist in "setting" them in groups of similar ability. But teachers argue that setting is inappropriate in primary schools and warn that children could be branded as failures only weeks after starting school if the assessments alone are used to determine their ability.

How children get to school was a matter of concern to the Institute of Child Health which, after 20 years of research, has concluded that those taken by car run an increased risk of obesity and illness in later life. The number of children walking to school has fallen from from 72 per cent to 59 per cent since the 1970s. At that rate, says the institute, child obesity "could rise to match the United States, where one in five is obese".

THE NUCLEAR reprocessing plant at Dounreay, in Caithness, is suffering from "chronic safety problems" and weak management according to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), which has made 143 recommendations for improving the plant.

Fears of radioactive releases led to the shut-down of the plant while the investigations were being carried out, and inspectors say that, because of this, it is "currently safe". No further reprocessing will be carried out, however, without the HSE's consent.

THE PRINCES William and Harry, teenage sons of Prince Charles and the late Diana, Princess of Wales, appealed to the nation to allow the memory of their mother to rest in peace. The time had come to stop grieving, they said.

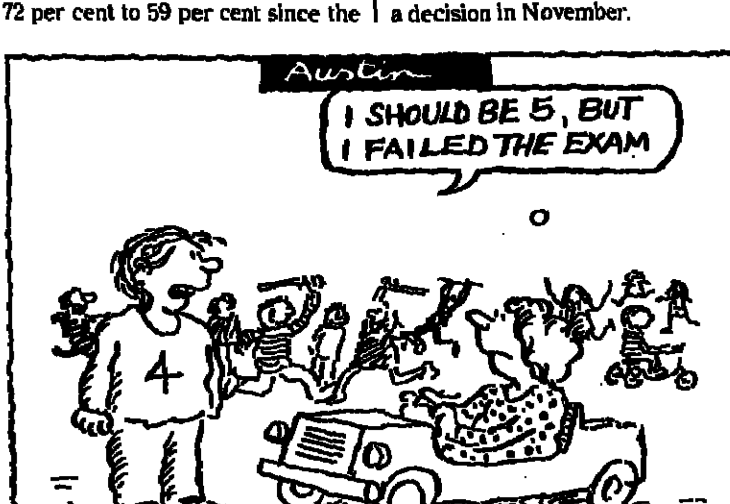
Although Buckingham Palace insisted that the princes' intervention was not a rebuke to anyone, it is clear that the royal family have been dismayed by some of the stories about the princess's death and hoped that a plea from Diana's children would stop mawkish media reporting of her life. The royals would also like to curb the burgeoning Diana memorabilia industry.

Polly Toynbee, page 12

MOVING the main evening news bulletin of Independent Television (ITV) from the 10 o'clock slot, which it has occupied for 31 years, to an earlier time of around 6.30-7pm might not seem a particularly momentous change. But ITV's application to do just that brought howls of rage from politicians, though viewers seemed not be unduly worried, perhaps because they can turn instead to the BBC's Nine O'Clock News.

Timing perhaps matters to politicians because most Commons votes are at 10pm, and a programme at that time offers them the best opportunity of being seen to be doing something.

Whether News at Ten is allowed to become News at Six-Thirty will depend on the Independent television Commission, which will take a decision in November.






Sarah Thomas: turning away from 'cattle market' PHOTO: CHRIS MOORE

## Model quits, jaded by waif worship

**Amelia Gentleman**

THE fashion industry's obsession with abnormally slender physiques has come under fire again, this time from within.

Teenage model Sarah Thomas has announced her decision to quit the catwalk in Paris, New York and Milan this year because she can no longer tolerate the fashion world's compulsive worship of the skinny form.

These views, from someone who has witnessed the industry's flaws first hand, have fuelled the long-running criticism of a business that promotes unattainable and unhealthy ideals as the norm.

Described as one of Britain's modelling success stories, Ms Thomas, aged 18, already feels jaded by the international fashion world and is rejecting the chance to earn up to £6,500 a day in the autumn shows because of the "ghastly cattle market". She said: "I had begun to dislike putting up with the pressure to be thin. People want you to be skinnier all the time."

The model, now the "face" of the cosmetics company Cover Girl, also said the drink, drug and eating problems of other models horrified her.

## Ashdown sets out 'big ideas'

**Michael White**

THE Government should use the proposed system of compulsory second pensions to prevent the economy from overheating, the Liberal Democrats proposed last week. The aim would be to force people to raise their minimum monthly pension payments whenever it wants to curb consumer demand.

The scheme, requiring employees to add a temporary extra 1 or 2 per cent to their pension contributions, would be a valuable tool for chancellors, especially if Britain joins the European single currency. Since people would eventually get back the money they are forced to save, it would be far more popular than raising taxes to curb demand, Lib Dem policy thinkers have decided.

The idea emerged, with such concepts as the "powerful citizen" and the "public service contract", from a series of policy reviews ordered by Paddy Ashdown ahead of what the Lib Dem leader last week promised would be a bruising and strenuous party conference in Brighton from September 20-24.

Mr Ashdown wants his troops to become "pathfinders for political reform", offering Tony Blair a real "third way" option.

Central to Lib Dem thinking about empowering the individual is the adoption of the "public service contract" model created in New Zealand. Ministers and civil servants would agree specific targets of service for the coming year. They would publish it and be held to account for their performance at year's end.

There would be no moving the goalposts, as the Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, had done over hospital waiting lists, Mr Ashdown said.

Among last week's other new ideas was the Neighbourhood Schools Trust (NST), devised by the party's education spokesman, Don Foster, and his team. It would allow clusters of schools to make a contract with local authorities to provide a wider range of school services in a particular community.

Rejecting the temptation to put more political distance between himself and New Labour — as many party activists will demand in Brighton — Mr Ashdown presented his 113-page policy package, Moving Ahead: Towards A Citizens' Britain, as "moving ahead rather than to the left".

To underline his independence he repeatedly sniped at Mr Blair and his ministers. Right across government they were still showing the urge to boss people around, he told journalists at Westminster.

"They love to interfere in our lives. There is a smell of moral authoritarianism which most Liberal Democrats find not very acceptable, even offensive at times."

It did not stop the Tories from taunting Mr Ashdown for "re-churning the same old leftwing nonsense". In a statement handed out to reporters at Lib Dem HQ by Tory officials, their chairman-elect, Michael Ancram, said: "They have always been, and remain, a party of the left. Far from being an enabling government and promoting powerful citizens, the Lib Dems would restrict freedom and choice."

## Union fights for more working-class MPs

**Lucy Ward**

WORKING people are being cast aside in Labour party selection procedures in favour of middle-class professionals, according to one the largest unions in the country, which will highlight its concerns at this month's party conference.

The Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union, the party's fourth biggest affiliate, wants to see more Labour candidates for the next general election plucked not from senior common rooms and legal chambers but from the shop floor or truck drivers' cabs.

The union, which still harbours grudges over a series of alleged snubs at the last general election in which its favoured candidates lost out to party favourites in several seats, is to switch £1 million from its political fund — currently available to the Labour party — to spend on seeking out and grooming working-class candidates for future elections.

The move follows months of frustration within the union's leadership over what it believes is the growing domination of middle-class professionals in the party.

Labour last week played down the AEEU's decision, pointing out that the 725,000-strong union was still affiliated to the party and paying affiliation fees.





# Hague gambles on euro showdown

**Nicholas Watt**

WILLIAM Hague this week embarked on the biggest gamble of his short career as Tory leader when he moved to crush a damaging challenge at the party conference by announcing a snap ballot of the party's 300,000 members to win approval of his hardline stance on the European single currency.

In an attempt to outflank party heavyweights such as Kenneth Clarke and Michael Heseltine, Mr Hague said he would be calling on the membership to endorse the shadow cabinet's decision to oppose monetary union at the next election.

Mr Hague, who decided to hold the ballot during his summer holiday, acted after reports that the former chancellor and deputy prime minister were planning to challenge his European policy at fringe meetings at next month's conference in Bournemouth.

At a press conference at Conservative Central Office, Mr Hague said that the party could not look to the future until it has dealt "with one last part of the legacy of the past". Watched by senior members of the shadow cabinet, he said: "As long as our party is distracted by endless debates on the single currency we will always have one hand tied behind our backs. I want to free everyone in the party, whatever their views on the single currency, to fight this Government with both hands and provide an alternative."

Mr Hague's gamble — which will need the support of at least 60 per cent of members to have any credibility — immediately laid bare the deep divisions over Europe. Within minutes, Mr Clarke dismissed the ballot, while Michael Portillo, the former defence secretary, hailed the move as "courageous and straightforward".

Ballot papers will be sent to the party's estimated 300,000 members on September 21, to allow counting before the conference opens on October 6. Leaflets explaining the pro and anti sides will be enclosed.

Mr Hague planned to begin a nationwide campaign for a Yes vote with a speech in London on Wednesday. In speeches in England, Scotland and Wales he will appeal to party unity by presenting the ballot as designed to heal wounds. On Monday he said grassroots members were "sick and tired" of the way the rival factions rowed.

Labour and the Liberal Democrats said the ballot highlighted Tory divisions over Europe. Labour accused Mr Hague of panicking ahead of the party conference. A spokesman said: "If he wishes to lock himself into a position based on dogma rather than the national interest, then the Tories will be the losers."

Malcolm Bruce, the Liberal Democrats' Treasury spokesman, said the move showed the Tories were "still at war", and Mr Hague was trying to "marginalise" his critics.

## Labour wary of proposals to reform the monarchy

**Lucy Ward**

DOWNING Street on Sunday moved swiftly to deny support for proposals from the Government's favoured think-tank for root-and-branch reform of the monarchy, including the abolition of the automatic right of succession of the heir to the throne.

The report from the left-leaning think-tank Demos — headed by Geoff Mulgan, a member of the Downing Street policy unit — stops short of recommending abolition of the monarchy, but argues "drastic" reform is needed if the institution is to match public expectations.

Among its radical measures are proposals to give the public the right of veto over a new king or queen, the scrapping of the monarch's political powers and the ending of the role of the sovereign as supreme governor of the Church of England.

Though the report comes after the royal family has signalled a cautious willingness to modernise, Downing Street moved to make clear that its vision of a "people's monarchy" does not come near the Demos recommendations. A spokesman said: "The report has nothing to do with the Government and does not reflect Government views. No one in the Government was involved in drawing it up."

Tory sources disagreed, suggesting Demos, with its close New Labour connections, was voicing "what Tony Blair thinks but can't say". The report could add to resentment among some within or close to Buckingham Palace, who believe that the New Labour establishment is trying to bounce the royal family into hasty reform.

Liam Fox, the Conservative constitutional affairs spokesman, suggested the report's recommendations that the royal family should use state schools and the National Health Service reflected efforts to "entrench centre-left New Labour ideas into our institutions".

He claimed details of plans by the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, to cut back the royal family's annual funding increase by two-thirds to a figure in line with the Government's inflation target was further evidence of Labour support for the "backdoor republicanism which Demos represents".

Treasury sources confirmed that the next 10-year deal over the monarchy's government funding, due in 2001, was expected to be significantly lower than the current annual 7.5 per cent annual increase, agreed under the last Conservative government.

Buckingham Palace offered a guarded acknowledgement of the report's conclusions. A spokeswoman said: "Whilst we will read the report with interest, any issues of constitutional reform would be a matter for Parliament to decide."

The Queen will be briefed on the report, and its findings studied by the Way Ahead Group — the informal committee of senior members of the Royal Family and their advisers. The group has already responded to Downing Street pressure to modernise with an agreement to reduce the number of royals permitted to adopt the HRH title. Other attempts to portray a monarchy more in touch with the people have seen the Queen visiting a pub and being photographed outside McDonald's, while Prince Charles posed with the Spice Girls.

Demos hailed an opinion poll published in last week's Independent on Sunday as evidence of public support for reform. The Mori poll found 60 per cent of people thought the monarchy should be modernised, while 49 per cent believed the Queen should relinquish her political role, including the right to dissolve parliament.

Polly Toynbee, page 12

**Main points**

- Automatic right of succession of the heir to the throne should be abolished with public right of veto over a new monarch
- Royals should receive state education and be treated on the NHS
- The monarch should not automatically be head of the Church of England
- The monarch should become a roving ambassador to "heal bitterness about Britain's past around the world"
- The Speaker of the Commons should take responsibility for appointing Prime Minister and dissolving Parliament
- The need for Royal Assent allowing Bills to become law should be abolished
- A minister of justice should take responsibility for appointing judges
- The Royal Household should be replaced by a civil service-run Office of the Monarchy

Airbus's Super Transporter was the star of this week's Farnborough Air Show. The whale-like 'Beluga' ferries UK-made Airbus wings to the European consortium's Toulouse assembly line, currently handling a record number of orders. *Full story, page 19* PHOTO: MARK CHALLONER

## Police accused of botching inquiry into 'race murder'

**Rory Carroll**

A BOTCHED Metropolitan police investigation into the suspected racist murder of a black man found burning in a London street has unleashed renewed accusations that incompetence and prejudice riddle the force — despite promises not to repeat mistakes exposed by the Stephen Lawrence inquiry.

A coroner's inquest this week is due to question detectives over a litany of blunders that could prevent four white youths suspected of killing Michael Tachie-Menson ever being caught.

In a letter to his family, Scotland Yard admitted senior officers made fundamental errors which could doom the investigation.

Mr Tachie-Menson, aged 30, died two weeks after being found staggering on the North Circular Road in Edmonton, north London, in January last year.

He told hospital staff and relatives he had been attacked and set alight, but officers assumed he had tried to commit suicide. They never took a statement from him and did not seal off the scene for 12 hours, losing valuable time in the search for forensic evidence and witnesses. Four weeks passed before an investigation was launched.

Scotland Yard said an internal review had resulted in four officers being "advised", but not disciplined, about their actions. Instructions on tightened procedures for "critical incidents" have been circulated to all officers in London.

In a letter sent to Mr Tachie-Menson's family, John Townsend, a deputy assistant commissioner, said his officers' actions in the first 12 hours after the incident were "not as thorough" as he would have wished.

Staff at North Middlesex Hospital relayed the victim's claim that he had been attacked. "However, it was not acted upon," he said.

## Alarm grows at BSE link to sheep

**James Meikle**

THE Government and European Union were trying to shore up consumer confidence in lamb this week as scientists in Britain and abroad prepared further investigations into possible links between BSE and sheep.

A senior government adviser, Jeffrey Almond, urged the Government to start testing sheep as a "matter of urgency", adding: "I think there is a distinct possibility that BSE is out there in the sheep population." Prof Almond said it would be a "national emergency" if that were so.

The chief medical officer, Sir Kenneth Calman, and officials for the European Commission in Brussels said on Monday that there was no new evidence of a health risk, but they promised to review all available information.

The Scientific Steering Committee of the EU is to meet later this month to discuss again whether high-risk parts of sheep should be banned from the food chain — but Britain has already unilaterally introduced controls.

The National Farmers' Union president, Ben Gill, shrugged off a suggestion by the Consumers' Association that parents might not want to introduce their young children to lamb while doubts remain. He said: "Not a single case of BSE in sheep has been identified in commercial flocks. Scaremongering helps no one. It is in all of our interests that we listen to the facts."

The heads and spleens of all sheep and goats and spinal cord of all animals over a year old have had to be removed in Britain since January, but most sheep meat eaten in Britain is of animals under a year old. EU-wide proposals by the Commission in 1996 were not adopted elsewhere, and these are likely to be revisited by the scientific committee, since Franz Fischler, the Agriculture Commissioner, will be resubmitting the proposals. There was no indication on Monday that Britain would face tougher rules without more evidence of risk.

"There is no evidence of a health risk from BSE in sheep," said a Commission spokesman. "However, we cannot exclude it. It is better to be safe than sorry."

The Government's Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (Seac) has advised more research into the possible link but said no further action is needed at present. Prof Almond, chairman of Seac's sheep sub-committee, said on BBC Radio that politicians "would have to live with the possibility that, if they went down the road of stopping the consumption of sheep meat, 40 million animals would be destroyed, a whole industry collapsing, and the consequent cost to the nation of that. To do nothing would be inappropriate, while to ban lamb would be ridiculous".

Prof Almond said only nine sheep have so far been tested for BSE. "Those tests take about two years to run each, and each costs £30,000 so, yes, we have to do more. But the priority in the early 1990s was not to focus on the sheep issue, it was to find out more about the cattle issue and whether that was going to pose a risk to humans."

## In Brief

AN Austrian woman left for dead after being gang-raped and thrown into a freezing canal has received compensation of £10,000. The payment to Alexandra Sablatnig, aged 34, renewed criticism of the controversial Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

KENNETH Noye will fight moves to extradite him to Britain in connection with the M25 road rage murder of Stephen Cameron, on the grounds that the publicity about the case over the past two years meant he could not receive a fair trial, his solicitor said.

A MAN who was extradited from the Netherlands appeared before a special criminal court in Dublin, charged with the murder of investigative journalist Veronica Guerin. Brian Meehan, aged 33, was flown back after losing a 10-month legal battle against extradition.

A TRANSSEXUAL pilot, Kristina Sheffield, aged 52, was awarded more than £77,000 by a tribunal which ruled that Air Foyle had discriminated against her.

A DRUNK passenger who kicked, butted and bit British Airways crew during a flight, forcing the pilot to make an emergency landing, was jailed for 15 months. Isleworth crown court heard that Elizabeth Elliott, aged 24, jammed one of the BA hostesses against a trolley when she was refused a drink.

TONY Blair promised extra pay for a new generation of "supernurses", to reward experienced staff who stay in patient care rather than seeking management roles in order to break through the pay ceiling.

A FATHER and son and two lifeboatmen sent to rescue them were winched to safety after spending more than five hours in a storm-battered sea cave on the Cornish coast.

SECONDARY school heads warned of a generation of "Spice babies" born to teenagers who opt for motherhood after being branded academic failures on entry to secondary school. The warning follows the recent announcement that two of the Spice Girls group are expecting babies, triggering fears of copycat pregnancies among impressionable fans.

SIR Gordon Newton, one of the great newspaper editors of the 20th century, has died, aged 90. Over 22 years he transformed the Financial Times from a City of London sheet, with a daily circulation of 50,000, into an international newspaper.

Lord Rothermere, last of the Fleet Street newspaper barons, has died, aged 73.

Obituary, page 25

# Adams concedes that the war is over

John Mullin

GERRY ADAMS, the president of Sinn Fein, last week marked a new era in Northern Ireland politics when he effectively conceded that the 30-year war mounted by republican terrorists was at an end.

Tony Blair, the Northern Ireland Secretary Mo Mowlam, and the Ulster Unionists hailed the move, and there were indications in Belfast that the IRA was on the brink of beginning to decommission its arsenal of weapons.

Sinn Fein followed up Mr Adams's speech by announcing that Martin McGuinness, its chief negotiator, would liaise between the IRA and the International Body on Decommissioning.

The move came just ahead of Bill Clinton's three-day visit to Ireland, during which he visited Belfast and Omagh, where the Real IRA's murder of 29 people in a bomb attack last month has acted as a spur for political progress.

Northern Ireland's political leaders met at Stormont on Monday to try to agree more progress before the 108-seat assembly reconvenes next week. David Trimble, First Minister and Ulster Unionist leader, was forced to address Mr Adams for the first time.

Decommissioning of weapons was the only contentious issue at a meeting described by Deputy First Minister Seamus Mallon as "very valuable".

Mr Trimble had said last Sunday that he would refuse to shake Mr Adams's hand, because "when he holds forward his hand, it's got two tonnes of Semtex, 600 AK47 rifles and God knows what else in it".

Although decommissioning of weapons is not a precondition of joining the 12-member power-sharing executive, Mr Trimble intends to maintain a tough line before he will agree to Sinn Fein taking up its two places on the shadow executive, which will be formed before Northern Ireland functions are devolved to it in February.

If Mr Trimble allows Sinn Fein into the shadow cabinet on the strength of Mr Adams's declaration last week, the move would infuriate Unionist hardliners and may lead to a split in the largest unionist party.

In his statement last week Mr Adams said: "Sinn Fein believe the violence we have seen must be for all of us a thing of the past, over, done with and gone." Everyone should work politically to make sure the "appalling" Omagh bombing was "the last violent incident in our country", Mr Adams added.

Sinn Fein was committed to exclusively peaceful and democratic means. It was committed to making conflict a thing of the past. "There is a shared responsibility to removing the causes and to achieving an end to all conflict," he said.

Mr Adams stopped short of using the term: "The war is over." But its thrust was clear, and makes an IRA return to violence inconceivable.

Downing Street called the statement "significant and welcome". Mr Blair said that the statement should help build confidence and break down mistrust. The Omagh bomb had pulled communities together, the opposite of what the bombers had intended.

John Hume, the SDLP leader, said he hoped that the statement would lead to direct talks between all political parties. He said it meant that the so-called war was over.

But Peter Robinson, deputy leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, was scathing, calling the statement a "word game".

Meanwhile the first 17 convicted terrorists, including one murderer to benefit from the accelerated release programme, part of the Good Friday agreement, were due to be freed this week.

The IRA restored its ceasefire 14 months ago, while at midnight on Monday the Real IRA declared a total ceasefire. The organisation, which announced a "suspension" of violence three days after the Omagh attack, has been under intense pressure to end its campaign.

Only Continuity IRA, a tiny republican splinter group close to extinction, has yet to declare a cessation of violence. Alone among the Ulster terror organisations, it has never killed anyone.



President Clinton meets well-wishers during a visit to Omagh, the scene of last month's bomb attack, as part of a three-day tour of Ireland which ended last Saturday PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN McCULLOCH

# Anti-terror bill given a rough ride

Michael White and Lucy Ward

THE Government's anti-terrorist bill last week received the Royal Assent after a gruelling passage through both Lords and Commons that generated new levels of mistrust towards Tony Blair's style of government.

Completion of the Criminal Justice (Terrorism and Conspiracy) Bill within 48 hours of its publication will likely trigger the arrest of suspected members of newly-proscribed republican organisations on both side of the Irish border, in line with even tougher legislation passed by the Irish parliament.

After the bill cleared a 16-hour Commons session at 6.50am last Thursday, peers of all parties set about repeating their elected colleagues' questions and complaints about the speed and the global scope of the measure. A bid to postpone detailed discussion for a week failed to win support.

The bill got its second reading in the Lords at about 9pm, without a vote. Peers then went on to the committee stage line-by-line consideration of the measure.

The Tory spokesman in the Lords, Lord Henley, said he had misgivings about the bill but backed it for the sake of the peace process, as did the Liberal Democrats' elder statesman, Lord Holme. It could have been managed in "a more measured way," Lord Holme said after a protest by his party chief whip, Lord Harris. Lord Harris was an aide to Lord Jenkins, the former Home Secretary who in 1974 put the original anti-terrorist package through Parliament after 19 people died in a Birmingham bomb attack.

"We are asked to give the executive almost absolute power to put the legislation on the statute book without detailed debate in the normal manner," said Lord Harris. Lord Cranborne, Tory leader in the Lords, expressed "deep unease" and said the bill had been introduced in an "extraordinary hurried and ill-prepared way".

Some of the MPs who had condemned the Government's approach took comfort from a pledge by the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, to speed up the introduction of taped police interviews in Northern Ireland.

Mr Straw also accepted Opposition calls for an annual report to Parliament on the bill's effect.

Lord Holme and his fellow Liberal Democrat, Lord Russell, were outraged that ministers had "tagged on" to the Irish component of the bill measures to make it easier to convict those conspiring in Britain to commit terrorist acts elsewhere in the world.

The measures were cast so widely "they could destroy Britain's reputation as a home for liberal groups in exile from authoritarian governments", Lord Holme said.

A bid to remove this clause from the bill was defeated in the Commons by 220 votes to 24, and the bill was then given an unopposed third reading.

Ministers again insisted there was a "clear and present danger" not only in relation to Northern Ireland but in light of the Islamic bombing atrocities in Africa. But Lord Holme insisted: "The timing is disreputable. It is as if the Home Office thought it could push something through in populist haste which really requires careful consideration at leisure."

The former Ulster Unionist leader Lord Molyneaux of Killead (Ind) cautioned peers against regarding the Real IRA, which carried out the Omagh bombing, as a tiny rump. He said the group, which had not been penetrated by the security forces, could be every bit as deadly as the body to which its members formerly belonged.

The Irish Republic's toughest clampdown on terrorism formally became law on Thursday last week after the legislation was approved without a vote by the senate, the upper house of the Irish parliament.

Comment, page 12

# RUC officer hit by blast

AN RUC officer was fighting for his life last Sunday after receiving serious head injuries when a blast bomb was thrown at police during loyalist rioting in Portadown, *writes John Mullin.*

Another policeman suffered leg injuries when officers came under a hail of the home-made bombs as they sought to quell rioting on the Corcrain estate.

Other incidents on Sunday included the punishment beating of two men in loyalist east Belfast, which left one person seriously hurt.

And the Real IRA's bomb in Omagh claimed its 29th victim three weeks after it exploded in the County Tyrone town. Sean McGrath, aged 61, died at the Royal Victoria hospital in Belfast.

Meanwhile the Northern Ireland Secretary, Mo Mowlam, came under attack after freeing two Scots Guards jailed for murdering an unarmed Catholic teenager six years ago. The family of Peter McBride said Ms Mowlam had assured them she would issue a press release calling on the Ministry of Defence to dismiss the soldiers, James Fisher, aged 30, and Mark Wright, aged 25.

However, the Northern Ireland Office denied that Ms Mowlam had told McBride's family she would call for the soldiers to be sacked.



# Northeast hit by mounting job losses

Peter Hetherington

THE GLOBAL economic crisis landed on Tony Blair's doorstep last week when a Japanese company announced the closure of the largest factory in his Sedgefield constituency, writing off an investment of nearly £500 million underpinned by government grants.

Six weeks after German electronics giant Siemens stunned ministers by abandoning a 15-month-old microchip plant on North Tyneside, with the loss of 1,000 jobs, the Fujitsu company is preparing to withdraw from a similar complex in Newton Aycliffe, 20 miles away. Almost 600 jobs could be lost.

Hard on the heels of the Japanese decision, Vickers, the engineering and defence group, threatened to close a plant if it is unable to secure new orders for its tank-manufacturing outlet in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

A Vickers spokesman confirmed that the group would have to close either its Newcastle or Leeds tank plant, both of which employ about 600 people, if it is unable to secure significant orders for its Challenger 2 battle-tank. The Leeds factory is thought to be marginally more secure because it has a testing track as well as a production role.

As the Trade and Industry Secretary, Peter Mandelson, held crisis talks with Fujitsu — with sources suggesting that Mr Blair had earlier met the Japanese ambassador to press for a last-minute reprieve — anxious Labour MPs demanded a change of economic policy to protect ailing industrial areas.

Although ministers blame the worldwide glut in semi-conductors for the closure, several MPs claimed the strong pound was partly responsible. "There has to be a change of direction if unemployment is not to rise dramatically," said one.

Labour MPs from the industrial heartlands are incensed by recent comments from Gavyn Davies, the Goldman Sachs economic guru and friend of senior Cabinet members, that job losses of up to 500,000 are a fact of life in the battle to keep the lid on inflation.

Mr Mandelson, whose Hartlepool constituency borders Sedgefield and provides workers for Fujitsu, is said to be drawing up plans for a taskforce to deal with the closure of the £500 million plant, which cost almost as much as the new Siemens complex. A DTI spokesman said it would be inappropriate to comment before the company had time to consult its employees.

But a senior northern MP said many were resigned to closure unless a deal could be arranged to save jobs with support from Mr Mandelson's industrial aid budget. Such assistance, running into tens of millions of pounds, played a key role in luring Fujitsu to County Durham and Siemens to North Tyneside. Pressure will now mount on them to repay grants, which could collectively approach £100 million.

Like Siemens, Fujitsu was opened by the Queen in November 1991. The plant reached profitability by 1993, and a year later it received a special award as the company's most successful factory.

● Union leaders met the Prime Minister at Downing Street on Monday to warn him that the recession in the manufacturing industry could turn into a slump unless the Bank of England cuts interest rates. However, Mr Blair told the delegation that the Government had the right mix of economic policies to avoid a recession, providing "nobody panics" and destroys confidence.

# Doctors told to cut back on antibiotics

Sarah Boseley

GENERAL practitioners were told last week to stop prescribing antibiotics for simple coughs, colds and sore throats, as part of a nationwide strategy to prevent what were once considered miracle drugs from losing their power to fight bacteria.

At least 15 million useless prescriptions for antibiotics are handed out by doctors every year for minor complaints caused by viruses, not bacteria. The Government is to launch campaigns to persuade GPs not to prescribe unnecessary antibiotics, and the public not to demand them.

The Government's Chief Medical Officer, Sir Kenneth Calman, is writing to all doctors as a first step, urging them to take on the recommendations of the Standing Medical Advisory Committee (Smac) which reported last week.

Antibiotics have revolutionised medical care in the 20th century, but there are growing fears that they may become useless. There are now "superbugs" resistant to almost all drugs, which have mutated to first weak and then stronger forms of antibiotics. A conference in Copenhagen this week will be told that, if nothing is done, antibiotics will not work in 20 years' time, and that drug-resistant bacteria will spread lethal diseases worldwide.

There are 50 million antibiotic prescriptions a year, half of which are for sore throats. Diana Walford, director of the Public Health Laboratory Service, who chaired the sub-group which produced the Smac report, said that two-thirds to three-quarters of those infections were probably caused by viruses. Antibiotics are powerless against viral infections, which usually clear up on their own.

But there is evidence that the Government will have its work cut out to change attitudes on both sides of the surgery door. A paper in the British Medical Journal quotes Christopher Butler, of the Department of General Practice, University of Wales College of Medicine, as saying that "antibiotics are prescribed for a variety of complex reasons and their symbolic effect for the doctor-patient relationship should not be underestimated. Single, simple solutions are therefore unlikely to change prescribing habits."



# Don't knock the Duma

THE State Duma is Russia's main democratically elected assembly. Its members have interests and principles — and constituents, to whom they must look for re-election. When the Duma rejects the nomination of a prime minister, as it has done twice in the case of Viktor Chernomyrdin, that should not be instantly characterised as a dangerous obstruction to the efforts to find a solution to the country's economic crisis. This is democratic politics, with political groupings and individuals manoeuvring for position while appealing to their supporters and to the public at large. Risky stuff, admittedly, when the economic and political prospects are so dire. Yet it is precisely because they are so dire that the Duma should not be condemned for making the most of a transition that offers it what it does not normally enjoy under Russia's excessively presidential constitution, a substantial influence over events.

As Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin, both diminished men, played out empty roles in their Moscow meetings, the mistakes of the past are clearly to be seen. The West put its bets on Mr Yeltsin as a strong man, and now that he is weak, it hardly knows what to do, except to cast around for a new strong man and hope that maybe Mr Chernomyrdin will do. We see the Russian crisis through spectacles in which one lens is focused on our own economic difficulties and another on the need to ensure that Russia's nuclear weapons are secure. Western governments thus have a tendency to welcome the autocratic and authoritarian solutions which, out of the other corner of their mouths, they say they deplore. But the main purpose of the parties and political groupings in the Duma is not to bring swift reassurance to worried Westerners or to halt the slide on other peoples' stock exchanges. It is to do what is right for Russia while still competing with one another for political advantage. After all, if Mr Chernomyrdin is successful in winning enough Duma support, the chances are that Russia will have picked not only its next prime minister but its next president, who might head the country for a decade. Surely it is not surprising when Duma members question whether this mediocre and limited figure, so involved in past failures, and so beholden to Russia's irresponsible new business class, is the man to lead the country into the next century?

It is not just the Communists and the nationalists who are opposing Mr Chernomyrdin, but the Yabloko bloc, which is the nearest Russia has to a social democratic party. That grouping, led by Grigori Yavlinsky, opposes him because they see him as the wrong man with the wrong policies. The Communists, who were in any case about to launch a campaign of demonstrations against the government, do not want to moderate their opposition to Mr Yeltsin except on terms humiliating to the president. Mr Chernomyrdin could nevertheless eventually make it: the Communists have changed their minds before. In any drawn-out process, new candidates will emerge. Such candidates may or may not be better than Mr Chernomyrdin and may or may not have a serious chance of achieving power. And the West may grit its teeth at the market uncertainties to which a longer transition in Russia will contribute. Yet who can deny that Russia's elected representatives have a right to take their time over a decision of such critical importance?

# A rushed, flawed law

IN the aftermath of the Omagh bombing, Mo Mowlam insisted that her government was not in the business of using "a sledgehammer to crack a nut". At the time, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland was discussing the merits of internment as a solution to the problem of the so-called Real IRA. And yet in 24 hours last week the Government rushed through Parliament a bill that is nothing if not a mighty, oversized sledgehammer — one that is hardly certain to crack the nut of dissident republicanism, but which is bound to take a large chunk out of Britain's fundamental civil liberties.

The Criminal Justice (Terrorism and Conspiracy) Bill comes in two key parts, the first dealing with the threat of violence in Northern Ireland, the second with foreign plotters hatching wicked schemes on British soil. The former contains several alarming erosions of liberty. It allows the word of a senior police officer to count as evidence of a suspect's membership of a proscribed organisation. If the officer is asked to substantiate his hunch, he can refuse, claiming that to reveal intelligence matters would damage national security. He can hide behind the dreaded Public Interest Immunity certificates, a tool of the state routinely abused for political ends. A suspect has lost further rights: he cannot remain silent to avoid self-incrimination, nor can he have a solicitor by his side. These are basic human rights, removed with barely a day's reflection by elected representatives.

Of course, the Government insists that such draconian measures are essential. Tony Blair's sombre reminder of the havoc wrought in Omagh last month was designed in part to hush all critics into submission, as if to object to the new bill is to support the Real IRA. That is nonsense. We object to these measures because they eat away at the very liberty and democracy that terrorism seeks to destroy. Moreover there are strong grounds to believe that crackdowns of this kind do not work. When they were tried before, chiefly in the 1970s, they only served to create a political grievance — and constituency — for hardline republicanism. The real response to terror is political, the kind of steady peacemaking that leaves extremists isolated and irrelevant. Recent days have seen proof of how a peace process — not the elimination of civil liberties — brings results: Gerry Adams has declared violence "over, done with and gone" and his deputy, Martin McGuinness, has said he will sit as Sinn Fein's representative on the body supervising the decommissioning of weapons. This is how the war against terror is won.

The measures designed to foil terrorist plots overseas are just as dangerous. Under the new law, an activist working against a vile regime abroad could be arrested in Britain, so long as the politicians have decided he is a terrorist — just as Margaret Thatcher branded Nelson Mandela in the 1980s. The long line of dissenters who have found a haven in London — from Garibaldi to the French resistance — would find themselves in the sights of the Metropolitan Police. Moreover the Blair government risks a diplomatic nightmare. In the past it could refuse pressure from foreign dictatorships to pick up troublemakers harbouring in Britain, claiming that our law simply did not cover their actions. Now it will — so the Cabinet will have to decide which émigrés are "terrorists" and which are "freedom fighters", offending a long line of foreign governments in the process. This is a bad bill: it is rushed, flawed and should never have been tabled — let alone passed into law.

# Sky's the limit?

CYNICS will suggest that Manchester United and Rupert Murdoch deserve each other. Both put money before everything else, are for ever searching for new ways of exploiting their audiences and are committed to expanding their commercial interests. But that would be too cynical. Manchester has every reason to be proud of its famous football club: no other British club has been as successful in the past 10 years. Mr Murdoch's satellite-television group, BSkyB, is ready to pay up to £575 million. BSkyB knows how lucrative football has become. It is easy to see why Mr Murdoch wants United but difficult to understand why Manchester is accepting the bait: it already has an income twice as high as the next English club and four times the Premier League's average. It does not need Mr Murdoch's money and should resist his embrace.

The UK sports minister, Tony Banks, is right: the deal raises profound competition-policy questions for both the sport and the news media. It would be preposterous if BSkyB's reported bid wasn't subjected to a forensic examination by the regulatory authorities. This deal is riddled with conflicts of interest. Mr Murdoch's interests already own the television rights to Premiership matches. If he gains control of United he will strongly influence the way the league votes for future rights. He has admitted that he uses sport as a "battering ram" to buy market share for his satellite TV companies but this doesn't mean he should be allowed to dominate every major sporting activity. And what about the conflicts of interest arising from his cross-media ownership? Will writers in the Sun be free to rubbish United and call for the manager or chairman's resignation? Will BSkyB commentators be constrained? It is one thing to dominate the medium through which television programmes are transmitted, but quite another to dominate the content as well.

# Abolish the monarchy and all its trappings

Polly Toynbee

WHEN Demos, the think-tank closest to Tony Blair, started work on its radical pamphlet on the future of the monarchy, no doubt it was judged well timed to launch it in the aftermath of the Diana anniversary. For many, it may fall into a well of utter exhaustion with anything royal. Enough, enough!

Britain may be Diana'd out, the princes may have called for no more, but there the monarchy is, a bizarre outpost of the political system that preoccupies national life to the point of utter insanity. In the days when the monarchy was dull and distant, dimly glimpsed in their kilts in the mists of Balmoral, they seemed unimportant. They were a piece of furniture, like a mahogany sideboard so drearily familiar we had long since stopped noticing its existence. In the real world where serious things were done, there were better things to worry about than their defunct powers. Bagehot's "dignified" part of the constitution would surely continue to fade gracefully into irrelevance.

Then came Diana, neither dull nor dignified. Her celebrity brought them back to centre stage, an epic drama unfolding before our eyes, fascinating in its banality, a public tragi-comedy that gave them back their full iconic status. Obsession gripped the nation as never before in post-war memory: Principe Tampax (as he was called in the Italian press) and Squidgy seemed to present a dysfunctional mirror of a dysfunctional society. They were, of course, nothing of the kind, nor is modern society especially dysfunctional, but that became the modern myth; royalty again as a symbol of our times.

It was not their behaviour that turned me republican: they are as free as the rest of us to behave as they choose, with all its consequences. It was the effect on the nation that makes it important now to end this infantile charade. Such fascination with such irrelevance turns Britons again into subjects, obliged to contemplate daily in detail the doings of people who have nothing to do with them, still less their national self-image.

Royalty and its trappings drag us back to a fantasy vision of who and what the country is. The glorious pageantry mocks all attempts at "modernising" and "rebranding" Britain, filling people with false ideas of their place in the world as the sons and daughters of empire, Bluff King Hal and Good Queen Bess, all heritage, no real history. If all glory and honour is vested in the past, the future can only seem like a continuing downward trajectory. So perhaps it's not surprising that the authors of the Demos pamphlet on rebranding Britain — a theme avidly taken up by Tony Blair — have turned their thoughts to rebranding the monarchy.

There is not, they assert, any evidence that the people want to abolish the crown, but there is discontent with the way the monarchy is run. So they propose radical reforms that have already attracted outraged front-page headlines in the Daily Mail.

The most dramatic of their proposals is for an "affirmative referendum" before each new monarch is crowned, requiring majority support. They also propose the crown should no longer appoint prime ministers and judges, dissolve Parliament or give Royal Assent to new Bills. The royal household would become a civil service department, and the monarch would no longer head the Church of England. A bicycling monarchy would use the National Health Service and state schools.

One of the authors, Tim Hames, is a Conservative political theorist, Times leader writer and author of rightwing pamphlets. No republican he. They say reform is the only way to save the crown. However, as the Mail rightly spots, much of this is more likely to destroy it. If these ideas take root, then in future times historians may look back and mark this as one of the stations on the road to abolition.

For once you start to apply much reason — let alone democracy — to the crown, the thing falls apart in your hands. Charles will be next king because of his genes and for no other reason. If we are obsessed with the extramarital doings of the royals, there is for once good reason: breeding is their purpose in life. If we were to start voting, it would raise the dangerous question. Why him? Why not someone else? Once the debate was begun in the run-up to a referendum, there might be no stopping it. Would republicans get equal time for pre-referendum broadcasts?

UNTIL now there has been no senior politician, let alone a party, willing to discuss the issue, so there has been no debate. Politicians hammer out the main issues of the day, but increasingly fail to offer voters a choice on pressing questions argued out in every bar and pub in the country, from the legalisation of cannabis to the abolition of the monarchy. So we should look with some doubt at current opinion poll findings: they might change if public debate began.

According to the Demos poll, a majority think the queen's residual political powers should be removed, yet an overwhelming majority want the monarchy to stay. An ICM poll recently found, however, that 52 per cent of the people thought the country would be no worse without it. That is a remarkable shift since 1994, when 70 per cent thought the country would do worse without it. So opinion is volatile.

Reform along the lines proposed would remove some pressing reasons for abolition. Reform would start an institutional revolution inside the darkest, least democratic corridors of power. If the crown no longer appointed judges, for instance, there would be an open debate on who should. But one overriding republican argument would remain. Abolition would free us from our national idolatrous obsession with these people. It may not be the royal family's fault — they too decry it — but we are reduced to absurd primitivism in our national fascination with such trivia. It makes Britain the laughing stock of the world. It diminishes and infantilises us in our own eyes. Given the chance to vote on it, the people might well decide it was time to put away these childish things and grow up.







# Pakistan teeters on the edge of chaos

Françoise Chipaux in Islamabad

MOHAMMED ALI JINNAH dreamed of giving the Indian subcontinent's Muslims a homeland of their own with the creation of Pakistan on August 14, 1947. But is that homeland now falling apart? Everybody agrees that the problems facing this country of 140 million people go far beyond an ordinary governmental crisis.

"Pakistan is facing an unprecedented crisis which is threatening its existence," claims the former prime minister and now leader of the opposition, Benazir Bhutto. "This is a total crisis of the economy, institutions, federal structures, ruling system, state and society. It's time we agreed on what we want and where we're going."

After a tottering economy was laid low by the backlash of sanctions and the flight of investors following Pakistan's nuclear tests, the recent United States cruise missile strikes in Afghanistan have revealed the contradictions of a country that seeks favours from the West while at the same time supporting the most backward-looking of Islamic regimes in Kabul and providing training in guerrilla warfare to a large number of young Afghan men turned into fanatics by extremist Islamic movements.

"If we don't put an end to the efforts to turn Pakistan into a warrior state, ideologically centred on an extremist credo of holy war, there's a great danger of our beloved country being outlawed and accused of supporting terrorism," says Bhutto.

The disastrous handling of the missile crisis by the Pakistani authorities, who have been issuing a spate of contradictory statements, has compounded the crisis of confidence in a government accused of conniving with the US while at the same time being incapable of ensuring the country's security.

The missile strikes have given a boost to Islamist movements, such as the Jamiat-i-Islami, which have decided to mobilise the masses to topple the government. Attempts by Nawaz Sharif's government to outdo the Islamists by introducing an amendment to make the Koran and the Sunna the "supreme law of Pakistan" are unlikely to mollify those movements whose leaders are publicly declaring that they no longer believe in the electoral process.

While the Pakistani authorities privately rejoice over the Taliban's success in Afghanistan, most analysts condemn the Pyrrhic victory that their allies' advance could turn out to be for Islamabad.

"Pakistan today appears to be morally and politically isolated, a situation it shares with the Taliban, who are presenting a deformed and repugnant Islam to the world," says Iqbal Ahmad, a Pakistani intellectual. "It is too early to measure the consequences of this isolation, but it is certain to whip up the sense of insecurity that has been haunting Pakistan for 50 years and has contributed so much to its poverty and militarisation."

The Central Asian republics, which only a short time ago raised hopes of new market openings, are today slamming their doors against the Taliban advance. Contacts with Iran, a traditional political and economic ally, have never been so minimal. Relations with India are on ice, and the publicity given to young Pakistanis from the Punjab training in Kashmir guerrilla camps is unlikely to improve them.

Even though the existence of these camps was known, New Delhi has a strong argument here. After the US assistant secretary of state, Thomas Pickering, warned India against resorting to violence in Kashmir, the Indian interior minister, M L K Advani, deplored what he called the US's double standards in dealing with terrorism. "We are the victims of terrorism and a proxy war waged by Pakistan," he says. "Do we not have the right to take all measures for protecting the security of our nation and its citizens?"

Only the US, as the chief provider of financial assistance vital for staving off bankruptcy, can bail out Pakistan. But Washington has set as its bottom line that Islamabad sign the test ban treaty and limit the development of nuclear weapons. Signing the test ban treaty, or at least making a firm commitment to sign it at an early date, is the key to loans from the International Monetary Fund and the rescheduling of the $32 billion debt that Pakistan owes the Club of Paris member countries.

The IMF is also insisting on stiff reforms which, like the signing of the test ban treaty, will be hard for a discredited government to sell to the country when, given the mood of anti-Americanism among the general public, such measures will be interpreted as capitulating to Washington.

An already inextricable crisis is further bedevilled by increasingly open dissension among the federation's four provinces, or rather, between Sindh, Baluchistan and Northwest Frontier Province on one side and "arrogant" Punjab on the other.

"Is Punjab becoming Pakistan's Serbia?" asks Shehzad Amjad, a news analyst.

In the 18 months that Sharif's Muslim League has been in power, it has succeeded in undoing the regional alliances in all three provinces. And a resurgence of violence in the economic capital, Karachi, is paralysing business.

Given this situation, some Pakistanis consider that the democratic system, however circumscribed it may be, is in the balance. By amending the constitution, as soon as he won power in February 1997, to withdraw from the president the power to dissolve the government, Sharif has practically slammed the door on any possibility of legal change.

The two big parties, the Muslim League and Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's party, are both equally discredited. Once again, many are turning for a possible solution to the army, which has run Pakistan for more than half its existence. The military do not seem to be interested in openly taking over the reins, but they may be willing to back a government of technocrats entrusted with pushing through vital reforms.

Pakistan, Amjad warns, is either going to accept wide-ranging political and economic reforms and make a new start, or sink deeper into the "bottomless pit of crises, conflagrations and anarchy" until it is "totally wiped out as a concrete geographical entity".

This is a gloomy prediction, but it is shared by an increasing number of people. Possession of the atom bomb has changed nothing in a country which, 50 years after it was created, is still feeling its way.

(September 3)

# A parody of justice

EDITORIAL

THE TRIAL of 138 people accused of belonging to an Islamic terrorist support network headed by Mohammed Chalabi, which opened on September 1 in a gymnasium at Fleury-Mérogis, outside Paris, sets a dangerous precedent. The legal system is turning its back on principles which, in theory, authorise it to dispense justice "in the name of the French people". During the hearings, which are expected to last at least two months, the defendants — 27 of whom are already in custody — will be herded into a gymnasium belonging to the national prisons administration and tried on an assembly-line basis, almost in the shadow of a prison wall.

How can these defendants be assured of an impartial hearing when right from the start the trial's legal setting is tantamount to an indictment? The trial is deemed to fall outside the framework of ordinary legal procedures because it is taken for granted that the defendants are necessarily involved with one another, accomplices of a "ring" who cannot be judged except as a single group and without worrying about niceties. How can justice be delivered calmly, responsibilities sorted out and degrees of involvement defined when the prosecution brief is a procedural monstrosity running into 74 volumes containing more than 30,000 sub-sections? How can the presumption of innocence be respected when some of the defendants have been in custody — without their guilt having been proven in a court of law — for almost four years?



A relative waits outside the court in Paris where a mass trial of alleged Islamic terrorists is under way PHOTO: JACK DABAGHION

This parody of justice, approved by the country's highest legal authorities, is the culmination of a questionable system that has been operating for more than 10 years. After the wave of terrorist attacks in 1986, a law was passed placing responsibility for such cases with a single section of the Public Prosecutor's Department, where they were turned over to a team of anti-terrorist judges. In order to "terrorise the terrorists", as the official line went, the end was allowed to justify the means. Since then, judges invested with extensive powers have been tracking down the enemy in Islamist circles in Corsica and the Basque region, readily resorting to mass round-ups, even if this means unjustifiably detaining scores of suspects.

Such a centralisation of anti-terrorist legal procedures cannot be criticised and does not lack effectiveness, but only on condition the law is strictly observed and the individual responsibilities of those put on trial are judged in all fairness. This is clearly not true in the Chalabi mass trial. It is impossible to try so many people at once. A show trial like this makes no sense, and only betrays a determination to give the public the illusion that France's drive against terrorism is producing results.

While there is only silence from those who are quick to castigate the French legal system when the mighty of the land are put in the dock, a small group of mostly immigrant workers will receive a raw deal at the hands of justice.

(September 3)

# Finnish PM is parental role model

Antoine Jacob in Helsinki

NORDIC prime ministers can sometimes be touchingly attentive to one another. Visiting Helsinki the other weekend, the Norwegian prime minister, Kjell Magne Bondevik, offered his host, Paavo Lipponen, a set of baby clothes. Lipponen, Finland's 57-year-old prime minister, became a father for the second time on August 21. He decided to take a week's parental leave as soon as his young wife checked out of hospital.

The pregnancy of 31-year-old Paivi Hertzberg was one of the most publicised events in Finland's history. Finns had been closely following the couple ever since they met at a Social Democratic party gathering when Lipponen had not yet divorced his first wife. Their marriage in January was like a royal wedding. Now Lipponen is going to take time off from work to look after the newborn child with his wife at their family home.

The minister of the economy, Sauli Niinistö, will stand in for the prime minister. Niinistö is a conservative, whereas Lipponen is a Social Democrat. But what does it matter? Finland is governed by a rainbow coalition that runs from left to right, and things are running quite smoothly.

This is the first time that a member of the Finnish government has taken paternal leave, which was made available for fathers some 20 years ago. The law authorises them to take from six to 12 days off work and be paid an indemnity, varying according to salary, of up to 440 marks (about $75) a day.

Lipponen prefers the Finnish system to that of neighbouring Sweden, where the father is obliged to take at least 30 days off work to look after his baby at home. A father on paternal leave receives 80 per cent of his salary, and the leave can be spread over eight years. The extra time is often used for holidays or watching sport on television.

The parental leave system is meeting with resistance from employers, who are not keen on allowing their male staff to get involved full-time in changing nappies and preparing feeding bottles. So the Finnish minister of social affairs is planning a campaign to increase public awareness of the father's role in the house.

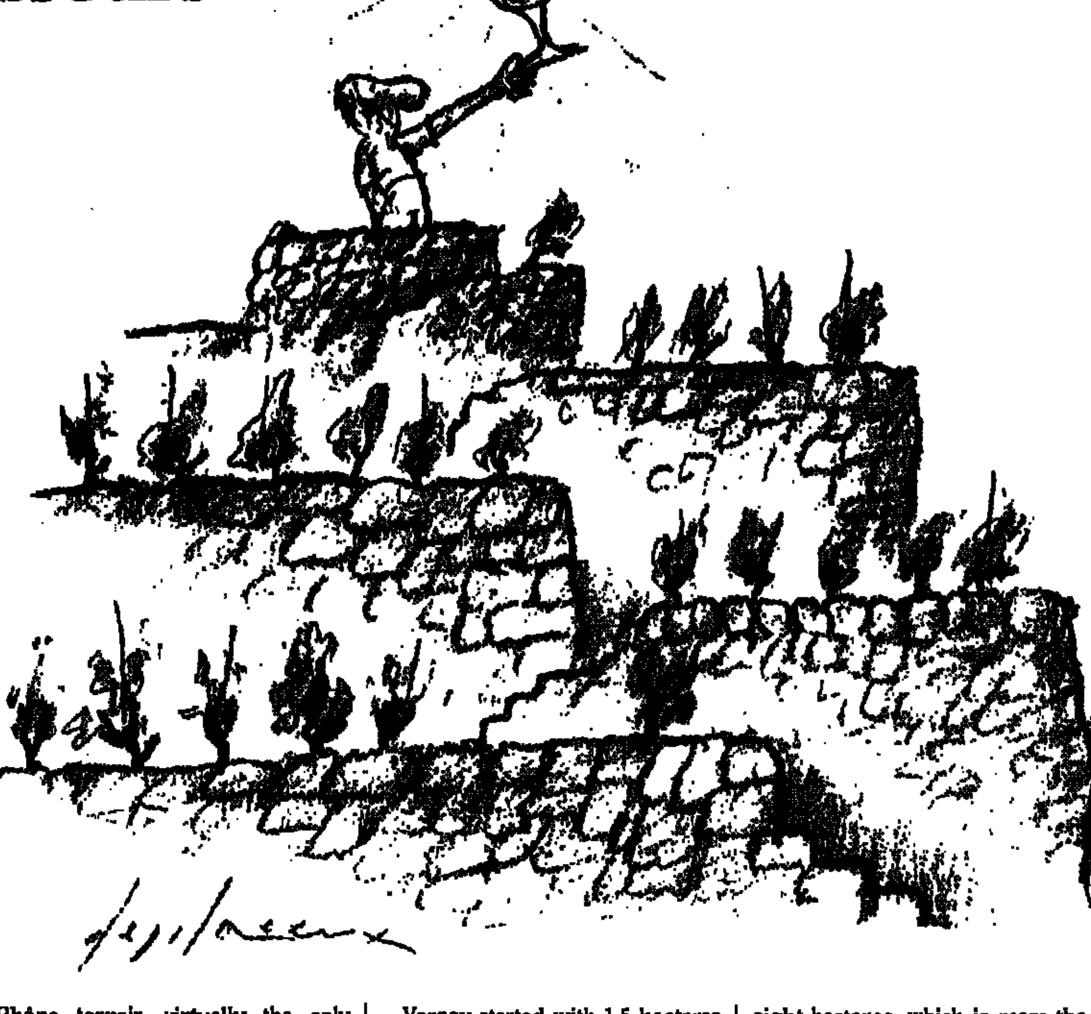
What better peg for promoting the cause than Lipponen himself? The prime minister should therefore expect to be invited shortly to promote the project. Judging by the way he goes about exhorting men to help their wives when they are having babies, he might well end up accepting the offer.

Formerly bear-like and unsmiling, Lipponen appears to have undergone a Pauline conversion — probably under the influence of his wife. But the coming general elections may also have something to do with it. The Social Democrats' image was tarnished by political and financial scandals in 1997, and they risk losing power in March 1999.

But this isn't discouraging the PM's popular wife from embarking on a political career: she is standing for a Helsinki seat.

(August 27)

# Condrieu wins back the connoisseurs



Guillaume Crouzet

IT WAS only just over 50 years ago that the Côtes-du-Rhône white wine, Condrieu, was first put in bottle. Until then, it had been sold in bulk. It did not travel well, so found a ready market in the bistros of the nearby mining town, Saint-Etienne.

Today Condrieu will be found on the wine lists of the world's top restaurants. A bottle of the stuff bought directly from the grower will generally cost 120 francs ($20) at the very least — always assuming there is any left to buy.

Not many people know Mount Pilat, the part of the Massif Central's granite substratum that juts furthest out into the Rhône Valley. The village of Condrieu — "corner of the stream" in old French — is located on the right bank of the river, in the shadow of Mount Pilat, 11km south of the town of Vienne.

The vineyards that surround the village cling to tiny terraces perched on steep slopes. They lie at the centre of a small production area covering nearly 100 hectares located in seven different communes. Average annual production totals no more than 250,000 bottles.

Condrieu is lucky to have survived at all. A combination of Phylloxera (the pest that devastated French vineyards in the second half of the 19th century), the first world war, the crisis in the wine trade during the thirties, and the particularly difficult conditions faced by Condrieu wine growers, who have to tend vines on very steep slopes, almost got the better of the Viognier grape, the only variety grown in the area.

Although an area of about 200 hectares was defined as Condrieu *appellation d'origine contrôlée* (AOC) in 1940, only six hectares had survived by the fifties.

"Everyone was grubbing up their vines and planting fruit trees," says Georges Vernay, the first grower who believed the appellation could be rescued. "At the time, *négociants* were paying 60 centimes [10c] per kilo for grapes, whereas apricots were already worth more than one and a half times as much."

In the seventies a book came out called Le Viognier Est-il Condamné? (Is The Viognier Doomed?). The thick-skinned grape, which contains relatively little juice, was indeed disappearing from this little Côtes-du-Rhône terroir, virtually the only place where it is cultivated.

Vernay and a handful of other winegrowers were determined to put their faith in Condrieu's future against all the odds. On the main road Vernay built a tasting booth with his own hands so that passing motorists could get to know the delights of Condrieu, a pale yellow, supple wine with a powerful bouquet of wild flowers and apricot.

For some time now, Vernay, who is 72, has left the task of vinification to his daughter Christine. But it is still difficult to keep up with him as he strides along the *chaillets*, the tiny terraces hewn out of the granite hillside, where it gets so hot in summer that it is possible to work there only between 5 and 10am. "The vine likes only one shadow, that of the person tending it," Vernay says.

The small strips of soil between the low stone walls are sometimes so narrow they can take only one row of vines. It is impossible to use machinery, so everything has to be done by hand.

Vernay started with 1.5 hectares of Condrieu in 1953. He has since gradually expanded to six. On a bend in the road that winds its way up the hillside, he points to a stretch of fallow land near his vineyard that he plans to buy soon. Condrieu, a wine regarded as a museum piece 30 years ago, is slowly but surely reconquering its territory.

Vernay has been savouring his victory. The television personality and gourmet, Bernard Pivot, delighted him when he said that his 1992 Coteau de Vernon was probably the best white wine he had ever tasted.

Other personalities such as top chefs Pierre Gagnaire, Paul Bocuse and Alain Pic in Valence have long been fans of the wine. Since the beginning of the eighties, many young winegrowers have in turn come to believe in the merits of Condrieu.

Yves Cuilleron followed in his wine-growing father's and grandfather's footsteps. Since taking over the business in 1987, he has increased the area of his estate to eight hectares, which is more than any other Condrieu grower.

Like many of his young colleagues who claim to have rediscovered what they call "the original truth of Condrieu", Cuilleron offers a version of the wine that is not dry, but medium sweet, or *moelleux*, as Condrieu used to be.

To produce it, he leaves the grapes very late on the vines and hand-picks them when they have been affected by botrytis, or noble rot (like Sauternes). The result of the process, his Récolte Tardive Ayguets, has a strong alcoholic structure, a high residual sugar level, and very cooked aromas of apricot.

While late harvesting is currently all the rage in Condrieu, it accounts for only 5 per cent of total output, according to the president of the Winegrowers' Union, Robert Niero. He is not himself one of its greatest fans: "Certain overripe cuvées are almost too heavy because they lack acidity. It's difficult to get the balance right."

# Wild about strawberries

A FEW years ago, most bought strawberries were cotton-woolly and utterly tasteless, writes *Guillaume Crouzet*. Growers tried so hard to develop sturdy, unbruisable fruit that they forgot that strawberries should also possess another quality: taste.

We can be sure that such strawberries would have been deemed unworthy by Thérésa Tallien, wife of the French revolutionary Jean-Lambert Tallien, who liked to put strawberries into her bath to soften her skin.

But over the past decade things have begun to change on the strawberry front. Under the aegis of Fraises de France, an association of 3,000 strawberry growers, the fruit is beginning to taste of something again — with spectacular results: in the past 10 years, consumption of strawberries has gone up by 50 per cent. The French now chomp their way through almost 4kg of the fruit each a year.

One of the best examples of the "new" strawberry is a spring variety called Gariguette. A narrow, conical, orange-red fruit with slightly acid, sweet-smelling flesh, it has become increasingly popular.

The variety is not new: it was developed in 1977 by the French National Agricultural Research Institute (INRA) at its Montfavet station in the south of France. But this year, when the harvest was exceptionally good, sales went through the roof.

The Gariguette has a short season, and by mid-June it is almost impossible to find any on sale. But by then another Fraises de France-sponsored strawberry — and no doubt the finest of the lot — will have begun to appear on market stalls: the Mara de Bois.

At the beginning of the nineties, strawberry grower André Marionnet, after 17 years of research, managed to develop this extraordinary fruit, which has the colour and size of a cultivated strawberry, but the taste of its wild cousin.

The Marionnet family have been based in the village of Soings-en-Sologne, in central France, for the past century and a half. At one point they split into two branches, one made up of nurserymen, the other of winegrowers. If André's cousin Henry talks about raspberries, blackberries, cherries or blackcurrants, he is referring to some of the aromas to be found in his excellent Gamay première vendange.

André's son, Jacques Marionnet, has 80 hectares of strawberry fields, including Mara des Bois. The variety has a feminine-sounding name in the best tradition of strawberries — wonderful old varieties were given names like Madame Moutot, Reine d'Août and Vicomtesse Héricart de Thury.

The incomparably scented Mara des Bois strawberries have one fault, though: they are extremely fragile and need to be eaten the day they are bought (which is usually no problem). They are also very expensive, at 80-120 francs ($12-$20) a kilo in Paris.

Le Monde
Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani



# Cafés offer a taste of Naples

**SOME French cafés have recently begun to offer customers a new type of coffee, an express à la napolitaine, *writes Guillaume Crouzet*. The Neapolitan firm, Rubino, the biggest coffee manufacturer in Italy after Lavazza, has just launched a Neapolitan-style brew called Kimbo.**

**"Coffee here in Naples is not the same as in northern Italy," says Rubino's production manager Ennio Giardino. "It's more heavily roasted. The raw coffee beans lose up to 20 per cent of their weight as they roast, whereas the more lightly roasted coffee preferred in the north usually loses only 15 per cent."**

**The two roasting techniques produce very different results. The Neapolitan espresso is more intense, longer in the mouth and bitterer (some people even say it has a slightly burnt taste), while its northern cousin is smoother and rounder, but also a little more acid.**

**The difference between the two is accentuated by the coffee varieties used. While robusta goes into most Kimbo blends, the celebrated Trieste-based manufacturer, Illy, uses only arabica in its espresso blend.**

**Andrea Illy, who is a perfectionist, subjects his coffee to electronic testing bean by bean before roasting and is thus able to weed out any that show the slightest blemish. "About 50 beans are required for a cup of espresso, and you need only one to be imperfect for the whole cup to be ruined," he says.**

**Although the first espresso machine was put on show as long ago as 1855, high-pressure machines are still rare in French households because of their price. Apart from what they drink in cafés (where a quarter of all coffee in France is consumed), the French prefer filter machines, which require twice as much coffee as an espresso machine to produce a cup.**

**Above all, the ground beans' lengthy contact with hot water and the lack of pressure have two negative effects compared with an espresso coffee: a higher caffeine level and less powerful aromas. Coffee has a very large number of aromatic components — more than 850 according to Genevan chemist Yvan Flament.**

**Jean Lenoir, a Burgundian who some years ago devised an original olfactory wine box, has just brought out a Nez du Café, which aims to introduce people to some of those aromas. After two years' research, he isolated a wide range of aromas, from the smell of garden peas to touches of fresh butter, caramel, potato and blackcurrant buds.**

**His box exists in two versions, one containing 36 aromas and a simpler version that offers a mere six aromas — an ideal number for someone wishing to initiate themselves in the fine art of coffee drinking.**







# Big Chill Greets Clinton Back Home

John F. Harris and Peter Baker

FACING the prospect that his presidency may be permanently disabled, President Clinton returned this past weekend to a Washington environment dramatically different than the one he left for three weeks of vacation and foreign travel.

With his political support eroding, Clinton enters a crucial fall election season needing to prove that he can still govern effectively and not simply go through the motions as a grievously wounded leader. Some advisers both within the administration and outside have begun to question whether he can maintain his fabled ability to "compartmentalize" his life, insulating political troubles from his policy agenda.

People who have talked with Clinton in recent days or spoken with senior aides about how he is holding up said he seemed rattled by the fallout from his nationally televised confession on August 17 and the damage he caused himself by his indiscretion and the deceitful way he responded to the controversy.

"His mood is as deeply sad as I've seen him," said an adviser who described Clinton as "quite disoriented" and "very stricken" by events of the past three weeks. At times on his foreign trip, he gave the appearance of a haunted man — his face drawn, his voice subdued, his eyes weighted by bags.

While there was some doubt at first whether Clinton understood the peril he was in or the degree to which he caused his own troubles, "this has registered," the adviser said. The adviser said Clinton's despondency has been exacerbated by the fact that "Hillary has not forgiven him."

A Clinton adviser who talks with him regularly compared his current plight with the aftermath of the GOP sweep in the 1994 congressional elections: He became despondent, filled with doubts, not to mention suspicious and resentful of his staff, just as he apparently has bridled at their advice and criticism since the Monica S. Lewinsky speech.

By the end of the trip he seemed more visibly upbeat, even managing a round of golf in Ireland last Saturday. This week he plunged into a robust schedule of events intended to promote his positions on education improvements, Social Security reform and the perilous state of the international economy.

Yet Clinton's predicament will cause intense scrutiny of his performance on these matters. His visits to Russia, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland last week demonstrated that it will be harder than ever to separate his problems from his policy — to put them "in a box," as he likes to say. Unlike previous foreign missions this year that provided welcome respites from domestic problems, the Lewinsky matter hung over every stop.

One former senior administration official who remains close to colleagues in the White House said he believes Clinton has not been able to compartmentalize the Lewinsky scandal the way he could earlier controversies.

"Filegate, Travelgate, what did he know?" the former official said. "He always saw Whitewater as a political issue. He always had a psychological distance from his problems. This is closer to the bone." The August 17 speech, the official added, illustrated how Clinton can no longer keep his personal problems removed from his political life.

Clinton also relied less on advisers during his overseas trip. As he prepared for his Moscow news conference with Russian President Boris Yeltsin, aides said they spent barely five minutes discussing how to respond to Lewinsky questions. Clinton told reporters at the event that he thought his original statement of regret had adequately addressed the matter. Two days later in Dublin, after Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman, D-Connecticut, back home criticized the president for "immoral" behavior, Clinton encouraged little discussion as he told advisers how he would respond. He then went before cameras to say for the first time that he was "very sorry" for his actions.

Clinton's mood evolved dramatically through the trip. In Russia, where Hillary Rodham Clinton appeared distant during joint events, the president seemed downbeat. His speech to Moscow university students was flat and generated lukewarm applause. His answers at the news conference with Yeltsin were soft and sullen.

When he arrived at Belfast to address leaders of Northern Ireland, he gave another speech that did little to rouse, But his spirits brightened visibly as the day wore on and he met thousands of admiring Protestants and Catholics who hailed him as a savior for brokering the Good Friday peace accords.



The president returns to Washington no longer able to segregate his personal problems from his political agenda PHOTOGRAPH: CHRIS KLEPONIS

By the time he reached Dublin, he finally evinced his more normal jocular confidence, ad-libbing jokes throughout a speech at a computer factory. He drank in the crowds at his final stop in southwestern Ireland, where he looked like a kid at Christmas as he reached out for a thousand hands on a rope line in Limerick.

White House officials traveling with him insisted that he was tired early in the trip, not dispirited. "We overscheduled him," said a top aide.

And foreign officials said they noticed no lack of focus in private meetings. "If he was distracted, he hides it very well," said Daniel Mulhall of the Irish Foreign Affairs Department. "Everywhere he was, you could see a real concentration. Distracted people don't ad-lib very well."

Still, while maintaining his ability to perform his duties remains unimpaired, Clinton aides acknowledged what they have been reluctant to concede until now that the Lewinsky matter has distracted the president.

"He's incredibly focused on what he's doing at the time," said a senior administration official who accompanied him. "But it's impossible for him in some way not to be affected. and it would be ridiculous to try to convince you otherwise."

If Clinton is losing his gift for insulating one problem from another, there are some supporters who think this may be not be such a bad thing. It is precisely this tendency to focus one thing at a time — heedless of how words and actions in one setting have consequences in another — that leads Clinton to commit reckless indiscretions, Curry said. "One of the few lessons of this is that compartmentalization is a bad idea," he said. "Your life is supposed to be in one drawer . . . Compartmentalization was always an illusion."

# Irrelevant Moscow Summit

EDITORIAL

**THE U.S. and Russian presidents tried to convey an impression of business-as-usual in their Moscow summit last week. They signed a couple of minor arms-control agreements. They talked about Kosovo and Iraq and NATO. They pledged (in President Boris Yeltsin's case) fidelity to economic reform and promised (in President Clinton's case) support if such reforms continue.**

**But their show didn't fool anyone. Russia has fallen into crisis. The state is in no shape to implement any arms-control agreements. There is no working government. The ruble has lost half its value in recent days, and the stock market virtually all its value. Just as in the crisis days of early 1992, Russians are hoarding dollars and stockpiling staples. But there's a key difference: Terms such as "market reform" and "democratization" are far more discredited now, linked in most people's minds with theft and corruption on a breathtaking scale.**

**The aging, erratic Mr. Yeltsin seemed the more out of touch of the two leaders. He flubbed one answer at a joint Kremlin news conference. He claimed, improbably and without foundation, "We have now adopted a program of stabilization measures." He refused to discuss his nation's political crisis.**

**Mr. Clinton, on the other hand, acknowledged at least in part the seriousness of Russia's dilemma. He correctly warned against inflationary monetary policies, bailouts for "a privileged few" and inequitable treatment of creditors. Yet, in describing "a light at the end of this tunnel" that Russia could reach "quickly" if parliament passed the needed laws, Mr. Clinton also seemed to underestimate the depth of Russia's crisis. Not surprisingly, the Russian media paid little attention to his remarks.**

**Mr. Clinton was not wrong to go to Moscow. The U.S.-Russia relationship remains critical. That Russia has remained within its constitutional framework thus far in this crisis provides some comfort. But no one should be misled about the dangers that lie ahead. There are as many explanations as there are Russia experts of what went wrong in Moscow. But when it comes to prescriptions for setting things right, neither Russians nor outsiders right now seem to have much of an idea.**

# Two More Arrested in Bombings

Michael Grunwald

TANZANIAN investigators have arrested two suspects in the August 7 bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Dar es Salaam, and the FBI has filed an arrest warrant seeking a third suspect in the nearly simultanous bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, law enforcement sources said last weekend.

The three new suspects, like the two suspects already in U.S. custody in connection with the Nairobi attack, are all Islamic extremists with links to Saudi terrorist Osama bin Laden, the sources said. They added that prosecutors are already starting to strategize about a criminal case against bin Laden, and said the far-flung FBI investigation is still gaining momentum nearly a month after the bombings killed 263 people and wounded more than 5,500 others.

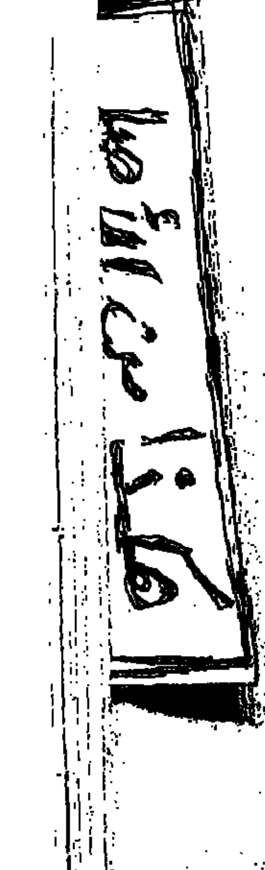
Sources said the new suspect in the Kenya bombing, a citizen of the tiny African archipelago of Comoros who had been living in Sudan, goes by the alias of Abdallah Mohammed Fadhul. A sealed criminal complaint seeking his arrest has been filed in New York, and last week, FBI agents and Comoran police raided homes belonging to his wife and his parents in the Comoran capital of Moroni, 180 miles off the east coast of Africa.

So far, Fadhul has eluded capture, the sources said. But investigators announced last weekend that they have detained two suspects — one Tanzanian and one non-Tanzanian — and three informants in the Dar es Salaam blast, the first public breakthrough in that half of the case. Kenneth Piernick, the top FBI official in Tanzania, told reporters that investigators there have made "extraordinary discoveries," and are now sure they know who carried out the attack and how it was done.

Sources said the FBI is also looking for several additional suspects in the bombings, although so far it has only sought a warrant for Fadhul. The sources would not say what role Fadhul or the suspects in Tanzania allegedly played in the bombings, but they are all believed to be members of al Qaida, which State Department documents have described as the "operational hub" of bin Laden's terrorist network. In the complaint charging suspect Mohammed Saddiq Odeh, already in U.S. custody, with 12 counts of murder, one for each American killed in the Nairobi blast, the FBI directly accused al Qaida of planning and carrying out that attack.

Over the last four weeks, nearly 500 FBI personnel have worked on the embassy bombings in more than a dozen countries. The forensic work is about complete, and investigators have identified the explosives involved as TNT. The FBI has by all accounts gotten along well with foreign investigators, and it has even worked cooperatively with the CIA, a longtime antagonist in similar situations.

"We've been on the opposite side of these things for too long," one FBI official said. "We realized that we needed to get on the same page and stop fighting, and we've done it. You can see the results."



# Barter Comes to Rescue in Russia

**Sharon LaFraniere**
**In Naro-Fominsk**

ECONOMISTS such as Clifford G. Gaddy of the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., see barter as just another sign of a fiscal irresponsibility that is leading Russia to economic doom.

Here at the Narfomsholk fabric factory, though, barter also reflects the tenacity and ingenuity of Russians who are determined to survive the worst hardships, including ruble-short customers.

The factory, 50 miles southwest of Moscow, has produced rolls of fabric for 157 years. The long production lines inside its solid brick buildings make up the shabby town's economic core. Even cashless, it produces almost 5 million feet of fabric a month, worth about $2.5 million, and employs around 2,500 workers.

It is awash in debt. But it is not nearly as badly off, for instance, as the toy factory in the same town. The director there says he can't pay anyone, despite frantic bartering, and is about to shut down.

Galina Orlova, the factory's commercial director, says Narfomsholk is in business thanks to its highly skilled, resourceful barter department of five engineers. They must work around a problem that would bankrupt any Western factory: Its principal customer, the Defense Ministry, doesn't pay "regularly," as Orlova politely puts it.

Since the 1991 breakup of the Soviet Union, the government has written off the factory's federal taxes in exchange for cloth for military uniforms. However, Narfomsholk's tax bill is less than the value of the fabric it provides, so it receives the remainder of its compensation in government securities, Orlova says.

If the government has disavowed such debt swaps, word hasn't reached Narfomsholk.

"It's a vicious circle," Orlova notes. "The Ministry of Finance doesn't have money because businesses don't pay their taxes, and businesses don't pay their taxes because they can't produce their products for money."

Factory officials won't give details about the securities the government hands over, but economists here say they are another abnormality of the system — promises by the government to forgive a certain amount of taxes. Companies then trade such securities in lieu of money.

It takes as many as 50 to 60 barter deals a month for the factory to hold off its creditors and retain a small profit, said Orlova. The little cash it receives it uses to pay workers, though it encourages workers to take their salaries in goods. It also runs its own store, stocked with products taken in through barter deals.

The simplest deal is the straight trade: fabric for chemicals, for instance. But none of the factory's creditors wants that much fabric month after month.

So Orlova and her hunt-and-gather crew must come up with other commodities to trade — lots of them. On her desk, Orlova keeps a list of the possibilities, specifically goods produced in the surrounding region.

Meat containers. Barbed wire. Boots. Souvenirs. Jewelry boxes. Concrete blocks. Water barrels. Furniture. Ironing boards. Outhouses.

"For God's sakes, whatever," laughed Orlova, covering her eyes for a second. "Of course it would be much easier to work if we could use real money, but, well, we have to use what we have."

The factory paid its telephone bill with a load of pay phones. Its local tax bill with military guard shacks. The water bill was a tough one: The water department insisted on a light blue truck — the color of water, they explained — and the fabric factory could only track down a white one.

Alexei Usanov, head of Electrosyet, the electricity provider, isn't very happy about Narfomsholk paying with utility poles instead of money. Almost all of his customers now pay in "mutual settlements," he said. "It's when papers move from place to place, and then people say that they do not owe each other anything."

"Nothing good comes out of this system," he said.

At closing time, the fabric factory workers hurry past a four-story, brightly colored mosaic from the Soviet era. It depicts laborers marching down a path as Soviet state founder Vladimir Lenin looks on from a balcony. "We shall build our own new world," it reads.

In a wholly unexpected way.

A heavy police presence greeted the Million Youth March in New York PHOTOGRAPH ADAM...

# Black Youth March Ends in Violence

**Michael A. Fletcher**
**In New York**

THE controversial Million Youth March ended in a wild melee last Saturday, as hundreds of police officers in riot gear rushed the rally's speaking platform after the event ran minutes over its allotted time period.

As police approached the stage, they were pelted with folding chairs, bottles, and heavy metal barricades by some march participants. The police retaliated with pepper spray and a massive show of force that allowed them to quickly secure the stage. Hundreds of police officers then moved through the march site, which was located along a six-block stretch of Malcolm X Boulevard in Central Harlem, and dispersed the estimated 20,000 people in attendance.

Police were seen leading several people away from the stage. Minutes later, scores of officers on horseback and motorcycles moved in to take control of the march site. Afterward, police reported that five people received minor injuries in the outburst. The violence provided a stunning end to an event that had been a source of bitter controversy. For weeks, recriminations flew between the march's lead organizer, Khallid Abdul Muhammad, and New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, who labeled the planned event a "hate march."

But the rally, while laced with angry rhetoric, focused mostly on the need for black youth to unify and take responsibility for their communities. As a result, many participants were angered by the aggressiveness of the police.

"This was wild," said Philip Mason, a Brooklyn resident who attended the march. "It seemed like the police wanted to provoke this incident." Alan Edouard, a student at Columbia University, said "it looked like the police tried to rush the stage. They never gave them any time to leave."

Even before the melee, the atmosphere was tense as the rally site was lined by hundreds of police officers who controlled the crowd with metal barricades. That tension was heightened after some speakers spewed angry rhetoric at Jews, whites, and the many black leaders who opposed the march.

In the moments before the rally was ended, Muhammad stirred the crowd by telling them to defend themselves if they are attacked by police. "In self defense, if they attack you take their god-damn guns," Muhammad said. "You take their nightsticks . . . and ram them up their behinds."

But as the police moved in tow[...] the back of the stage, Muhamm[...] appeared to be trying to wrap up [...] event, telling police: "Back [...] asses up and we will leave in pea[...]"

The violent ending capped wee[...] of contention between march org[...]nizers and city officials, who at fi[...] tried to block the march by refus[...] to grant organizers a permit. Ma[...] organizers sued and a federal jud[...] ruled that the march could be h[...] but that it had to be restricted [...] four hours along a six-block str[...] of Malcolm X Boulevard.

Much of the controversy su[...]rounding the march was the re[...] of the lead role played by Muh[...]mad, the former Nation of Is[...] official who gained promine[...] through his fiery remarks insult[...] Jews, Catholics, and even So[...] African President Nelson Mandel[...]

In statements before the mar[...] Muhammad repeated some of t[...] statements that have made h[...] notorious, drawing sharp retalia[...] from Giuliani and other city offic[...] who condemned Muhammad a[...] anyone who would attend his mar[...]

The march also has been [...]tacked by a host of civil rights le[...]ers, who dismiss Muhammad as [...] hate monger. Many of them a[...] backing a series of events in Atla[...] that culminated in a youth mar[...] there on Monday.

# Kosovo Status Postponed in Talks

**R. Jeffrey Smith in Rome**

THE TOP U.S. negotiator for Kosovo matters has won agreement from Yugoslavia's president and the province's senior elected ethnic Albanian leader to postpone discussion of Kosovo's long-term legal status, essentially bypassing the issue that most sharply divided the two politicians.

Christopher Hill, the U.S. ambassador to Macedonia, said he won support for the idea from Ibrahim Rugova, the head of Kosovo's largest ethnic Albanian political party, at a meeting last week in Pristina, capital of the Serbian province. Rugova is a long-standing advocate of resolving the Kosovo conflict peacefully.

Hill's meeting with Rugova came one day after a meeting with Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic in Belgrade that produced what Hill called a "procedural breakthrough" — namely, a promise that any immediate deal on Kosovo could be re-examined and amended in three to five years.

Hill has been trying to broker a cease-fire and interim solution to the Kosovo conflict for three months without concrete progress. Although the agreement achieved is a modest step forward, the parties to the conflict remain bitterly divided on most key issues.

Sources close to the armed ethnic Albanian guerrillas who have been fighting to win Kosovo's independence and who oppose Rugova's leadership said that they thought the plan was a mistake.

Hill's strategy is to try to negotiate an interim deal allowing a degree of self-rule by the ethnic Albanians that compose 90 percent of Kosovo's population. But other U.S. officials have expressed skepticism that such a deal would be in the interests of the West, because Milosevic's behavior suggests he will not respect it and the West will have little leverage to enforce compliance.

Milosevic stripped the ethnic Albanians of partial autonomy in 1989. Since then, he repeatedly has ruled out future independence for Kosovo.

But ethnic Albanians overwhelmingly say they want only independence, and the dispute has provoked six months of violence, produced the death of hundreds of ethnic Albanians and displaced more than 10 percent of the province's 2 million people.

A key factor in resolving the dispute is the future posture of the armed guerrillas who have formed a loose-knit Kosovo Liberation Army. After a month of punishing battlefield losses by the rebels, U.S. officials now privately express scorn for the group's leadership and say its decisions are of little relevance to the negotiations.

But many guerrillas have expressed equal scorn for Washington's role in what they fear may become a sellout to Milosevic.

Under the current U.S. plan, "the aim is to deal with other issues" besides independence, such as laying the ground for general elections in Kosovo and giving the resulting ethnic Albanian leadership local political autonomy for the first time in a decade, one U.S. official said.

But he acknowledged that there remain many obstacles to an interim accord, among them a continued disagreement about the presence of thousands of heavily armed Serbian troops in Kosovo and about the shape and authority of a future parliament.





The United States cannot defeat terrorism with bombs and bombast, argues ex-CIA man **Raymond Close**

# Hard Target to Hit

MY FIRST job for the CIA's clandestine services 46 years ago was to organize a network of informants in the squalid Palestinian refugee camps of southern Lebanon — some, ironically, barely a stone's throw from where my grandfather and great-grandfather established American mission schools more than a hundred years ago. The camps and the squalor are still there, no longer breeding grounds of communism as they were in the 1950s, but of the threat called terrorism.

Most of us accept the premise that terrorism is a phenomenon that can be defeated only by better ideas, by persuasion and, most importantly, by amelioration of the conditions that inspire it. Terrorism's best asset, in the final analysis, is the fire in the bellies of its young men, and that fire cannot be extinguished by Tomahawk missiles. If intelligent Americans can accept that premise as a reasonable basis for dealing with this nemesis, why is it so difficult for our leaders to speak and act accordingly?

After the military strikes in Sudan and Afghanistan, U.S. officials justified their action by citing Osama bin Laden's "declaration of war" on everything American. But to launch missiles into countries with which we are technically at peace — and to kill their citizens — is to declare that the United States is free to make its own rules for dealing with this international problem. What standing will we have in the future to complain about any other country that attacks the territory of its neighbor, citing as justification the need to protect itself from terrorism? Did those who authorized these attacks think through the long-term implications of this short-sighted and dangerous precedent?

Let's get down to practical realities. The new threat we face is often stateless, without sovereign territory or official sponsorship. Friendly governments around the world — especially those with large Muslim populations such as India, Pakistan, Egypt, Turkey, Jordan, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Gulf states and the new republics of Central Asia — share a common need for internal and regional stability. Terrorism is a weapon that threatens all civil authority. This set of circumstances provides an unprecedented incentive for intergovernmental cooperation, even among states that may differ on other basic issues. But the fight against a silent and hidden common enemy requires infinite patience and tact on the part of law enforcement agencies and intelligence services. It demands absolute secrecy, mutual trust and professional respect. If the United States loses its cool without warning, if it is seen by others as a loose cannon that resorts to sudden violent action on a massive scale, the critically needed cooperation will not be there.

My hunch is that the next time we call for help (from Pakistan, for instance, whose very competent police work was evidently vital to the investigation of the Nairobi and Dar es Salaam bombings), the officials of that country's intelligence service, who are responsible for discreet liaison with the CIA or the FBI will be conveniently "out to lunch." My ex-colleagues at the Agency, and the experienced professionals at the Bureau know how hard it is to develop trust, and how quickly it can evaporate.

In declaring a full-scale war on terrorism, the Clinton administration seems tempted to emulate Israel's failed example. Israel's situation is totally different from ours in every imaginable way. The state of Israel has been committed for 50 years to a policy of massive and ruthless retaliation — deliberately disproportional. "Ten eyes for an eye," the Israelis like to say. And still their policy fails, because they have not recognized that terrorism will thrive as long as the Palestinian population is obsessed with the injustice of their lot and consumed with despair.

Even those who approve in theory of using military retaliation as a weapon against terrorism would agree, I think, that launching unmanned missiles at distant targets as ill-defined as "the infrastructure of terrorism" is neither an effective military strategy nor a credible deterrent against future criminal acts. This will be even more true when the adversary is armed some day with cheap, do-it-yourself weapons of mass destruction. In our understandable frustration, are we resorting to a modern form of the same "gunboat diplomacy" that proved so counterproductive for the dying European empires at the end of the 19th century?

Over several years, the United States has tried vainly to control Iraq's behavior by launching similar kinds of stand-off strikes against Saddam Hussein. Very recently, our policymakers concluded that this wasn't working.

So when Saddam Hussein again defied the U.N. inspection regime a few weeks ago, we mumbled some weak excuses and pretended we hadn't noticed. Now, by launching attacks against suspected terrorist targets in Afghanistan and Sudan and threatening more violent retaliation in the event of further incidents, we have started down that same dead-end road. This move, seemingly inspired more by exasperation than cool reason, violates basic rules of both diplomacy and warfare.

ILLUSTRATION. LAUREN URAM

President Clinton and others have labeled all Islamic terrorists as members or "affiliates" of the "Osama bin Laden Network of Terrorism." This is, of course, the common mistake of demonizing one individual as the root of all evil. In fact, elevating bin Laden to that status only gives him a mantle of heroism now and, more ominously, will guarantee him martyrdom if he should die.

Informed students of the subject have known for years that although the various militant Islamist movements around the world share a common ideology and many of the same grievances, they are not a monolithic international organization. Our recent attacks, unfortunately, may have inflamed their common zeal and hastened their unification and centralization — while probably adding hosts of new volunteers to their ranks. We are rolling up a big snowball.

The worst nightmare of our strategic military and security planners is that a small and weak enemy could hold us hostage by possessing a weapon of monstrous power, yet so insignificant in size and appearance that we cannot see it, cannot locate it, and therefore cannot attack and destroy it. The recent military strikes sent the message again, loudly and clearly, to all who would count themselves as our enemies: Accelerate your efforts to acquire new and deadly high-technology weapons — and manufacture and store those weapons in hard shelters in the midst of your civilian population. American policymakers and military planners have an obligation to evaluate every proposed action by the standard of whether it will help postpone the day when this nightmare may come true. I believe our leadership failed to do so before last month's operations.

Meanwhile, the bombing, portrayed as necessary to forestall additional terrorist acts, has produced a level of public alarm in Washington that is precisely what the terrorists hoped to inspire. What have we done to ourselves?

What worries me most, in the final analysis, is that our attacks on the targets in Afghanistan and Sudan were reminiscent of what we call "vigilante justice" in American folklore. This kind of policy weakens our leadership position in the world and undermines the most effective defenses we will have against the terrorist threat: a commitment to the rule of law, dedication to fairness and even-handedness in settling international disputes and a reputation as the most humanitarian nation in the world.

Raymond Close, who served in the CIA from 1951 to 1977, is an international business consultant who travels frequently to the Middle East.

# Portrait of an Obsession

**John Banville**

THE MUSEUM GUARD
By Howard Norman
Farrar Straus Giroux. 310pp. $24

THERE are certain novels, few in number, that insinuate themselves into memory, not by the strength of portrayal of their characters or any vividness of style, but by a quiet relentlessness of insistence. Reading them is a faintly alarming sensation, like being trapped in a train compartment with someone whose gleaming gaze and fixed half-smile tell you even before the person begins to speak that this is going to be a long journey. You hide behind your newspaper in vain; there is a story that must be told, and you must listen, however resentful or bored or restless you may feel. Howard Norman's latest novel is an impressive and admirable achievement, which will buttonhole the reader from the first sentence: "The painting I stole for Imogen Linny, Jewess on a Street in Amsterdam, arrived at the Glace Museum, here in Halifax, on September 5, 1938."

The speaker is DeFoe Russet. He is in his late twenties, and works as a guard in the Glace, a small, private institution. He shares the guardianship of the museum with his Uncle Edward, a vigorous eccentric, given to drinking and gambling and as much womanizing as the times will allow; Uncle Edward is — and is, I think, meant to be — the novel's most vital character. DeFoe, whose name would seem to have been enough misfortune for any one child, was orphaned at the age of 9 when his parents were killed in a zeppelin crash, and since that time Uncle Edward and his sporadic women friends have been the only family DeFoe has known.

The dozen or so pages at the opening of the book that describe the day of the accident are masterful. His parents, off to the fair for the zeppelin ride, have left young DeFoe at the Lord Nelson Hotel in the care of his uncle and his girlfriend, Altoon Markham (Norman has an odd way with names). When Uncle Edward goes off to receive the bad news of his brother's and his sister-in-law's deaths, the boy and Altoon must while away the hours of waiting, which is when DeFoe learns to iron shirts, thanks to Altoon. This sequence, however downbeat, is so moving that afterwards it is hard for the book to recover its pace; in the hands of a lesser novelist, it would have been impossible.



ILLUSTRATION: JILL KARLA SCHWARZ

DeFoe is, as might be expected, emotionally frozen; at moments of high drama and distress he will retreat to the basement of the Lord Nelson, where he lodges with his uncle, and take over the ironing from the understanding hotel laundress.

DeFoe meets the young woman Imogen Linny, whose mother was Jewish, and who works as caretaker of the Jewish cemetery in Halifax. They begin a fitful and, for DeFoe, frustrating relationship, marked on his part by puzzled yearning, and on Imogen's by headaches and mysterious depressions. When an exhibition of contemporary Dutch paintings opens at the Glace, however, she becomes obsessed with one of them, "Jewess on a Street in Amsterdam". Imogen gradually comes to identify with the woman in the painting, has clothes made up to match those worn by the model, and in the end determines to go to Holland and "become" the artist's wife.

Meanwhile the news from Europe is bad and getting worse. Uncle Edward too becomes fascinated by Imogen. Eventually tragedy strikes, and Imogen, seeking to cure her condition of having "become estranged from my very soul," goes off to Amsterdam, as the Nazi threat grows ever more menacing.

A measure of this novel's richness and sly power is the difficulty one has in attempting to say just what it is about. One of the characters remarks of Imogen: "Watching her, I thought that one's personal history — Imogen's, that is — is so much more immediate than History writ large." And certainly The Museum Guard communicates far more vividly and affectingly than any factual account of the period could do the pathos of that fatal conjunction between the individual and the terrible machinery of the world which is so horribly exemplified for us by the fate of the Jews in this century. In his quiet, unemphatic way, Howard Norman has written a large book in a small compass.

# The Tallest Tale

**Leo Carey**

ZARAFA
A Giraffe's True Story, From Deep In Africa to the Heart of Paris
By Michael Allin
Walker. 215pp. $22

THE Medicis had one in the 15th century. Caesar had one in 46 B.C., and later Romans used to watch them being slaughtered at public games. But when the creature that Michael Allin calls Zarafa arrived in Paris in 1827, she was the first giraffe Europe had seen for almost three and a half centuries. A gift from Muhammad Ali, the viceroy of Egypt, to Charles X of France, she became an instant favorite with the French public. Her story fascinated Allin so much that he retraced her 3,500-mile journey across two continents. His book, alternating between a detailed account of Zarafa's story and an illumination of the historical background against which it took place, not only rescues a charming anecdote from obscurity but also makes a convincing case for its importance in the world of 19th-century Mediterranean diplomacy.

Zarafa was born in 1824 in the highlands of what is now southeastern Sudan, but even before she was born her capture had been ordered. Muhammad Ali wanted a unique gift to affirm his friendship with France's new king, especially as Ali was about to make himself unpopular in Europe by invading Greece in support of the Turks. France had been Egypt's best friend in Europe ever since Napoleon conquered the country in 1798 and intellectually colonized it. Muhammad Ali, whose reign began in 1805, was more than happy to sell off "ancient debris" (as he called such items as the Rosetta stone and the obelisk from Luxor that is now in the Place de la Concorde) in order to generate revenue to modernize his kingdom.

Captured at 2 months old, Zarafa was taken to Sennar where she was kept for a while to gain strength and trust for people, a feature that earned her the affection of many of those who encountered her. Then she was taken on a barge up the Nile, via Khartoum and Cairo to Alexandria, a route that, as Allin points out, was also a conduit for Muhammad Ali's other big export, African slaves. Allin's detailed recreation of the journey draws on research among records in Cairo, where every command Muhammad Ali uttered in his 40-year reign is written down.

From Alexandria, Zarafa sailed to Marseilles, her body in the hold, her head sticking out through a hole in the deck. So important was Zarafa considered that France's preeminent naturalist, Etienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilare, was sent to supervise her transit to Paris. Weighing up the many ways of getting a giraffe from Marseilles to Paris, all of them difficult, he and the prefect decided that the simplest means was to walk her on a leash in short daily stages. So began the spectacle of the giraffe on tour, drawing bigger and bigger crowds in the provincial towns on her route. In Lyon 30,000 people (a third of the population) turned out to see the exciting novelty.

Once she reached Paris, giraffomania took hold of a fashion-obsessed public hungry for exotic novelty. The giraffe's image and its distinctive patterning found their way onto soaps and plates, jewelry and gingerbread, topiary and gentlemen's cravats. Fashionable women wore their hair "a la Girafe," its architecture so huge "they had to ride on the floor of their carriages." Allin's book reproduces several contemporary paintings of Zarafa, which seem to emphasize the beauty and grace in her large calm eyes and the aristocratic, almost disdainful droop of her mouth.

AFTER this heady climax of arrival, the story tails off. From Muhammad Ali's point of view the gift was a failure. Though his army defeated the Greeks while Zarafa was walking through France, the European powers signed a treaty against him, and his fleet was destroyed in the Greek port of Navarino later that year. Charles X had only three years to enjoy his giraffe before he was forced to abdicate and spend the rest of his life in exile. Zarafa, meanwhile, lived out her days peacefully in the Jardin des Plantes.

She died in 1845 and Allin, dogged to the last, tracks down her stuffed form to a museum in La Rochelle, where she resides among other historical curiosities such as a dodo skeleton and Marie Antoinette's pet orangutan, each of whom, one feels, might well be worth a book of its own.

# The Lure of the Middle Kingdom

**Judith Shapiro**

THE CHAN'S GREAT CONTINENT
China in Western Minds
By Jonathan D. Spence
Norton. 279pp. $27.50

ONE measure of a country's greatness, argues Jonathan Spence, is its hold on the imagination of others. His new book offers a cornucopia of evidence for the West's fascination with China. Here is China glimpsed in the writings of traders, diplomats, missionaries, novelists, poets and adventurers. Some of these writers never visited China; others lived and died there. Some studied the language, most did not. For some, China was a central preoccupation; for others, it was a lens through which to refract other concerns. Some wrote of China, others (like Mark Twain and Bret Harte) of Chinatown, and still others (like Marco Polo, who failed to mention tea, calligraphy, or footbinding) may not have been writing about China at all.

Their images of China, or what Spence calls "sightings," are so marvelously varied and inconsistent that he concludes, "The secret lies in the ear, the ear that hears both what it wants and what it is expecting." Surely there are lessons here concerning Western perceptions of China in our own time, which also, all too often, reveal more about the observer than the observed.

This slim and (because Spence hoped to avoid a catalogue effect) deliberately less-than-comprehensive volume skims across the material like a skipping stone. The Chan's Great Continent is an entertaining journey through longing, desire, misunderstanding, fear and revulsion.

One is tempted to quibble with Spence's 48 selections, arrayed across 700 years, from 1253 to 1985. There is not enough on Karl Marx and his controversial hypothesis about a stagnant "Asiatic Mode of Production," which caused theoretical headaches for his Chinese communist followers. Here are poignant accounts by missionaries in Han Chinese areas, but nothing from those who served among ethnic minorities.

One might cavil at the inclusion of "sightings" from literary figures and philosophers whose knowledge of China was secondhand at best. Yet it is not Spence's purpose to draw conclusions over accuracy. Rather, he "seeks to give a sense of the multiplicity of intellectual and emotional attitudes that Westerners have brought to their attempts to deal with the phenomenon of China" and give testimony to China's "capacity to stimulate and to focus creative energies at specific moments in time." In this sense, the book is a fascinating exploration of the diversity of cross-cultural response. The China of the Western mind is a source of endless curiosity, but ultimately it is unknowable and beyond reach.

Spence's grab-bag includes early "sightings" from Marco Polo, Catholic missionaries and the first Portuguese and British diplomats, as well as words from Franz Kafka, Italo Calvino and Jorge Luis Borges. As diplomats struggled with the issue of ritual bowing before the emperor, Christians argued over whether ancestor worship was a significant violation of their morality. In the late 19th century, ambivalence toward foreigners was pronounced: Britain's Lord Macartney found himself "narrowly watched," his curiosity about China unwelcome. Local rumor so wildly distorted the list of his presents to the Qianlong emperor that it was said to include humans less than a foot high and an elephant the size of a cat.

Enlightenment-era "sightings" from Montesquieu, Voltaire and Leibniz explain China's perceived stagnation through a preoccupation with the past and the difficulty of the language. "Women observers" (missionary wives but also Jane Austen, whose brother traveled there) include Eva Jane Price, who lost two small sons to disease before she was killed in the 1900 Boxer Rebellion. Her "sighting" conveys the poignant isolation of a foreigner's life in the Shanxi hinterlands.

To what does this add up? Spence is of little help here, calling the West's receptivity to things Chinese "a mystery." But if there is a message in this kaleidoscope of images, it is that, from the first contact, China has provided the West with a prism for a dizzying display of contradictory impulses and tendencies.





# Airbus outstrips Boeing to become Top Gun

**Joanna Walters**

THE DIN of fighter planes and jumbo jets buzzing the crowd at the Farnborough Air Show this week is likely to be drowned out by gloating talk from European aerospace industry executives, whose record year has all but silenced their United States rivals.

Passenger jets are this year's key battleground, and Europe's aircraft and engine manufacturers are riding the crest of a boom. The American giant Boeing is in crisis after dominating the world of passenger flying ever since the Wright brothers made the first powered flight in 1903, spawning an industry that now carries 1.5 billion people a year.

Europe's four-nation Airbus outfit — a British-French-German-Spanish consortium — is in the throes of a double celebration.

First, Airbus overtook Boeing in the first six months of the year to win 52 per cent of all the orders for passenger aircraft placed by the world's airlines and leasing companies — 287 compared with Boeing's 279. Second, Airbus lured the most important customer in its 28-year existence when Boeing devotee British Airways placed its first order with the European consortium last month.

In contrast, Boeing's commercial aircraft boss, Ron Woodard, lost his job last week after a nightmare year that saw the company so overstretched with orders that it was forced to suspend production of the 747 and the 737 and report its first financial loss for 50 years.

Chris Avery, aviation analyst at Banque Paribas, said Boeing's problems had arisen because it tried to double production to cope with a boom in orders, develop several new aircraft and absorb McDonnell Douglas — all at once.

Boeing's planes are top-quality, their safety record is good and its salespeople are second to none. But its production facilities badly need modernising. They are less efficient, with lower levels of technology, than those of the younger Airbus.

Avery said: "Most Boeing production facilities are based on techniques that date from the days of building bombers for World War Two. The boys in Seattle are fixing the wings to the fuselage with rivet guns. At Airbus it's all done by computers and robots."

# Capitalism on a fast road to ruin

Controlling the flow of capital may be an idea whose time has come again, says **Larry Elliott**

IT WAS hard to know which was the greater shock — the Financial Times supporting capital controls or the New Statesman saying it was time to bring back Keynes. But last week, as the global crisis rumbled into Latin America and sent tremors through Western stock markets, one thing was clear: change is in the air.

As the bible of business, it was only to be expected that the FT would devote a leader to Malaysia's decision to introduce wide-ranging capital controls. Rather less predictable was what the leader actually said.

"Capital controls have become dirty words in today's economic orthodoxy. But as the crisis in Southeast Asia showed, unfettered movement of capital can have devastating effects," it argued. "Capital controls allow the de-linking of domestic monetary policy from exchange-rate movements. Under certain conditions, this could prove a way forward for the Asian crisis economies."

Three caveats then followed, but all the same this was pretty explosive stuff. Nor was the FT alone. Days earlier, the Swiss daily Neue Zürcher Zeitung, the newspaper read by the "gnomes" of Zurich, said the financial crisis had become so bad that the "poison cabinet" had to be opened and exchange controls implemented.

The voice of the Swiss banking system added that financial markets needed reflationary stimuli. But in the current panic-stricken environment, any such move "would trigger just another confidence crisis in the financial markets. The key question, now, is how to regenerate confidence".

Well yes, absolutely. But haven't we been told for the past 20 years that markets are self-stabilising, and that any attempts to curtail capital liberalisation is both counter-productive and vain? Apparently all that laissez-faire stuff has for the time being gone out of the window.

So why the change of heart? First, it is quite clear that the surrender of economic control from the state to the untrammelled market has been an unmitigated disaster. Second, having been rumbled, that international capital is prepared to make a few concessions now rather than face tougher controls later.

When the Group of Seven industrialised nations meet in London this week to discuss a rescue plan for Russia there will doubtless be much talk about how the system is basically sound. This is nonsense. It is like putting an inexperienced driver in a high performance car and giving him a huge incentive to get from A to B as quickly as possible.

For true believers there is nothing wrong with this. The markets know best, even when time horizons can be measured in minutes and the sums involved are staggering. But this can only be true under certain circumstances. To return to our boy racer, providing his car was travelling across the Australian desert on an open road for a thousand miles, there would be no problem in putting his foot down. If the future is predictable, the system automatically corrects itself.

Keynesians have always argued that the real world is not like that. Roads have corners and become clogged up with vehicles and pedestrians. The reality for most of us is not peering out of the window to spot the odd kangaroo bounding across the outback but driving, nose to tail, around busy motorways.

All of us know that roads need strict rules and cars need good brakes. We have been persuaded, however, that all the global capital markets need is the very lightest touch on the tiller.

Without brakes, the system has careered into an all-too predictable pile-up. Countries now have a choice: either to crawl along very slowly using high interest rates to keep the speculators happy, or to reinstall the car's brakes. Unsurprisingly, some of them are deciding to plump for the brakes.

For Malaysia and Russia — which have decided they have had enough of speculation — it is undoubtedly the right decision. The real need for Malaysia is for lower interest rates, which will allow the recapitalisation of the bombed-out banking system. This cannot possibly happen if lower rates lead to hot money leaking offshore.

Similarly with Russia. As Mark Horn and Richard Harrison of stockbroker T Hoare put it last week, Russia needs a domestic credit bank to help turn the country from a barter to a monetary economy. However, it can only do this with exchange controls.

LOOKING at what is happening to those countries doing things by the book, it is not hard to see why there is a growing mood for change. Indonesia, which has had the full International Monetary Fund treatment over the past year, is suffering from an alarming increase in unemployment, a precipitous fall in school enrolment and a reversal of the anti-poverty programme of the past 30 years.

A few months ago, Malaysia and Russia would have been pilloried as extremists for daring to challenge the orthodoxy. But the truth is that the orthodox approach to the current crisis has not worked. The IMF is running out of money, running out of ideas and running out of friends.

Initially, it was said that the Asian meltdown was a problem of transparency, and that all that was needed was to improve the flow of information to the market.

But as Joseph Stiglitz, chief economist of the World Bank, noted in a speech in Chicago earlier this year: "It is worth observing that some of the countries with the weakest financial sectors, the greatest lack of transparency, and the most corrupt political structures, were hardly touched by the contagion from East Asia. These were countries with closed, or at least more closed, capital accounts."

This was not the end of Stiglitz's deviation from the orthodoxy. He argued that restructuring done the IMF way could lead to havoc, and in turn credit crunches, contributing to the insolvency of firms that otherwise would have survived.

Stiglitz said that there was a need to design "financial systems that buffer the economy against shocks rather than magnify the shocks ..."

The Stiglitz view of the world is entirely sensible. His argument is that if governments and the IMF have to bail out countries after a crisis has occurred, it would be more sensible to prevent the crisis happening in the first place.

The problem is not a shortage of economists with ideas for re-regulating capital, but with a lack of political will and political courage at a time when there is a desperate need for governments to break with the economic orthodoxy of the past 25 years and to face up to the twin perils of deflation and global financial anarchy.

## In Brief

**THE powerful American hedge fund Long-Term Capital has reported a loss of $2.1 billion last month, wiping out 44 per cent of its asset base. It had been racking up annual gains of more than 50 per cent for wealthy investors since it was founded in 1994. It came unstuck in as investors, seeking safe havens as markets tumbled, shifted into more conservative US treasury bonds.**

**HITACHI announced that it will post a net group loss of 250 billion yen ($1.7 billion) for the current financial year — its first slide into the red since 1947 and underlining the desperate circumstances facing Japan's manufacturing industry. Japan's largest electrical machinery maker was predicting a profit of 40 billion yen as recently as three months ago.**

**SHELL and Texaco announced plans to merge their European oil-refining and petrol station businesses in an attempt to cut costs, as the industry struggles to cope with the lowest oil price for a decade. The Petrol Retailers' Association said the deal signalled further job losses and forecourt closures across Europe.**

**BROWN & Williamson, a subsidiary of the British conglomerate BAT, may have broken the law by urging tobacco executives to hold back internal documents, according to the US Justice Department, which is pursuing criminal investigations against several leading American tobacco companies. The US government is focusing on whether Brown & Williamson lied to the Food and Drug Administration and other government agencies about nicotine levels in its cigarettes.**

**BRITISH drugs group Zeneca was given the go-ahead to market the world's first anti-cancer drug for healthy patients. The company's tamoxifen compound, developed 25 years ago, was approved by US drugs regulators as an effective preventive treatment for women at risk of developing breast cancer.**

## FOREIGN EXCHANGES

| | Sterling rates September 7 | Sterling rates August 24 |
|---|---|---|
| Australia | 2.8210-2.8274 | 2.8259-2.8299 |
| Austria | 20.25-20.26 | 20.71-20.73 |
| Belgium | 59.34-59.45 | 60.67-60.72 |
| Canada | 2.5363-2.5395 | 2.5369-2.5392 |
| Denmark | 10.94-10.95 | 11.20-11.22 |
| France | 9.647-9.657 | 9.86-9.87 |
| Germany | 2.8780-2.8804 | 2.9436-2.9466 |
| Hong Kong | 12.92-12.93 | 12.69-12.70 |
| Ireland | 1.1457-1.1503 | 1.1720-1.1708 |
| Italy | 2,842-2,845 | 2,903-2,905 |
| Japan | 219.63-219.93 | 235.63-235.93 |
| Netherlands | 3.2483-3.2519 | 3.3193-3.3219 |
| New Zealand | 3.2750-3.2834 | 3.3279-3.3345 |
| Norway | 12.85-12.85 | 12.82-12.83 |
| Portugal | 294.62-294.88 | 301.33-301.65 |
| Spain | 244.31-244.54 | 249.81-250.03 |
| Sweden | 13.22-13.24 | 13.49-13.51 |
| Switzerland | 2.3534-2.3565 | 2.4590-2.4618 |
| USA | 1.6686-1.6696 | 1.6390-1.6399 |
| ECU | 1.4624-1.4646 | 1.4909-1.4927 |

FTSE100 Share Index down 208.7 at 5347.0. FTSE 250 Index down 300.9 at 4747.1. Gold up $4.00 at $288.75.



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Applications are invited for teaching appointments in the Department of English Language and Literature. Candidates should possess a PhD degree. Those with relevant teaching experience at University level and published research will have an advantage.

The Department of English Language and Literature is one of the larger Departments in the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences. Its staff of Singaporeans and foreign nationals have PhD degrees from top universities such as Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, London, Stanford, Chicago, and MIT. It has a vibrant research culture manifested in the international language and literature conference series it hosts annually, its staff publications with such presses as Oxford University Press, Macmillan, Singapore University Press, Cambridge University Press and Unipress and its Visiting Professor series of lectures and publications. Its breadth of teaching concerns is reflected in its range of integrated courses in linguistics, various areas of language such as discourse analysis, phonology and semantics, literature, cultural studies, film, and theatre. Distinguished academics who have been associated with the Department in various capacities in the post and continue to be associated with it include Professors Michael Halliday, John Sinclair, J.M.Boulton, Robert J.C. Young, Ronald Carter, R Asher and Benito Ortolani.

Candidates should be able to teach in one or more of the following areas:

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- *Applied Linguistics*
- *The Interface of Language and Literature*

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- *Asian theatre*
- *Technical Theatre*
- *Voice*
- *Classical theatre*

Applicants for posts in sociolinguistics should have done research, or have an interest in Southeast Asia.

Applicants for the post in applied linguistics should have some specialization in materials development and education.

Applicants for the post in language and literature interface should have an interest in both Language and Literature (not simply 'Stylistics').

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Applications are invited for the post of Registrar & Secretary which will become available on 1st January 1999. The Registrar & Secretary is the Head of Administration in the University.

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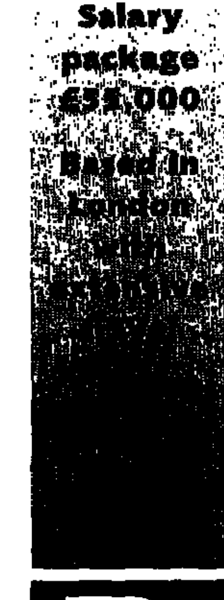
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# Biodiversity: tearing up the map of creation

A fish the size of a barn door is facing extinction. But if we failed to notice this until it was almost too late, how many other species are disappearing? What we do know, says **Tim Radford**, is that the massacre of species at current rates has baleful consequences for Planet Earth – and humanity

A *BIG* fish is about to swim away — for ever. The barndoor skate *Raja levis* seems close to extinction. In 1951 research ships found it in 10 per cent of all trawls of the St Pierre Bank in the Atlantic ocean off Newfoundland. Over the past 20 years, none have been caught there. The barndoor skate grows to a metre across, not something you would miss if you were looking out for it. But nobody was. "Failure to examine historical data has resulted in the largest skate in the North Atlantic being driven to near extinction without anyone noticing," say researchers. If something the size of a barn door could slip away without being missed "the fate of little known species is likely to be worse".

The things that make life possible are barely visible. Laboratory experiments based on small, artificial worlds keep demonstrating that diversity is life's strongest card. The recycling of air and water and plant nutrients is the business of little creatures most of us never notice. The food we eat, the medicines we take and the tools we use have been fashioned for us by 500 million years of evolution. Yet we know practically nothing about most of them. We even lack a starting point. Who knows how many small fry are being dished?

Creatures are being erased from life's register faster than anyone can record them. All the evidence is that humans are extinguishing other life forms on an epic scale. But there are no tallymen to count the dead, or take the measure of the living: there are probably only about 7,000 experts — they are called taxonomists, or sometimes systematists — on the whole planet with the authority to distinguish one species from another. Most are in the wrong places. And few have been getting much encouragement. Without them we cannot even begin arguing.

It was not until 1758 that Carl Linnaeus, the great Swedish taxonomist, began counting the animal kingdom. French and British natural historians followed, and established a systematic way of interrogating a creature's nature in order to make a family connection. In the course of 240 years, they established a local habitation and name for each of about about 1.7 or 1.8 million species.

But there is no central catalogue or inventory. So the same species might be recorded under one identity in one country and under an entirely separate name in another. Where scientists have checked, they have found "synonymy" in perhaps 20 per cent of cases. So the true number of species that have been described and named is perhaps 1.4 million.

Then researchers began to look a little harder. They spread nets under trees, dusted them with insecticide and counted just the arthropods (including insects) that fell out. The numbers astonished them. When they got to 50,000, they started to get alarmed: by that reckoning there might be 20 million species to be described, rather than 2 million. What was true for the Amazon rainforest turned out to be equally true for coral reefs and mangrove swamps.

But taxonomists are oppressed by something darker than the task of counting. What is going on now is described, quite calmly, as "the sixth great extinction". The fossil record is a pattern of evolution and extinction, with species continuously evolving, flourishing and expiring as naturally as individuals are born, develop and die. Imposed on this hubbub of appearance and disappearance is a series of dramatic happenings: mass disappearances, followed by new beginnings, at least five times in the past 500 million years.

The last of these was 65 million years ago, when a 10km asteroid whacked into the Yucatan in Mexico. The change now is less dramatic but no less significant. According to some theorists, half of all the creatures with which humans share the planet could be about to steal away into the eternal night, simply because their homes are being destroyed. By humans. The world's dwindling tropical forests could be losing creatures at the rate of 27,000 a year — three creatures an hour — at the most conservative estimate.

The precision of these figures is disputed, but the truth behind them is not. During the past century birds and mammals have been disappearing at an average rate of one a year.

## Life's rich tapestry



### Animal detectives

A taxonomist classifies organisms. This traditional method of counting species suggests that insects dominate the world's biodiversity. However, new methods – using gene-typing techniques – reveal that single-cell microbes have a greater diversity than insects and plants



* Includes noninsect arthropods (spiders, crabs), molluscs, worms, fishes, birds, reptiles, amphibians, mammals

### Natural remedies

Like many drugs, aspirin was developed after scientists began to analyse chemical constituents of plants used in traditional, herbal healing. Called the ethnobotanical approach, it may uncover future drug treatments

| Drug | Medical use | Plant Source |
|---|---|---|
| Aspirin | Reduce pain and inflammation | *Filipendula ulmaria* |
| Codeine | Ease pain, suppress coughing | *Papaver somniferum* |
| Ipecac | Induce vomiting | *Psychotria ipecacuanha* |
| Pilocarpine | Reduce eye pressure | *Pilocarpus jaborandi* |
| Pseudoephedrine | Reduce nasal congestion | *Ephedra sinica* |
| Quinine | Combat malaria | *Cinchona pubescens* |
| Reserpine | Lower blood pressure | *Rauvolfia serpentina* |
| Scopolamine | Ease motion sickness | *Datura stramonium* |
| Theophylline | Open bronchial passages | *Camellia sinensis* |
| Vinblastine | Combat Hodgkin's disease | *Catharanthus roseus* |



Rosy periwinkle *Catharanthus roseus*



Opium poppy *Papaver somniferum*

Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*



Thornapple *Datura stramonium*

GRAPHIC: GLYN WALTON

This is already a thousand times faster than the "background" rate of extinction. It is confirmed by crude counts made by the conservation groups: a tenth of all flowering plants are about to disappear, a tenth of all birds on the planet are seriously endangered, many of the big mammal groups — the cats, in particular — could be about to disappear. But 99 per cent of creation is less than 3mm long. Most of the smaller species will be gone before scientists find out they were here.

So taxonomy's high command decided to stake out small areas of forest or savannah and simply sample the local life, quick headcounts of this and that species. Such a British project in the Cameroon came to an abrupt end only last year. Scientists had marked out a few hectares of already well-studied forest and had begun to catalogue all the creatures in just a limited selection of groups. They gave up. There were simply too many species to count.

"We could have carried on, but we would have needed many more taxonomists and systematists," says John Lawton, of London's Imperial College and president of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

There's the rub. "The global workforce, considered to number 7,000 systematists, is clearly inadequate," says Stephen Blackmore, keeper of botany at the Natural History Museum in London. Work by taxonomists involves travel to faraway places on budgets that simply don't stretch very far.

Biodiversity is a matter of naked human self-interest. Human economy rests on plants. Crops and their wild relatives have to be understood and conserved, and that means the insects that prey on them must also be understood. Plants that provide most medicines — from aspirin for headaches to taxol for breast cancer — have developed the chemicals they possess as a response to their co-evolution with insects. There could be billions of dollars of useful, valuable, exploitable knowledge to be gained from almost unknown creatures in their habitats.

Last year Cornell scientists calculated that if humans had to pay for the services they received free from nature — pollination, water purification, crop pest control, that sort of thing — the bill would be $2.9 million million annually. Fellow creatures are a kind of map of creation.

"Just knowing how many species there are is like having proper maps of the stars," says John Lawton. "It's exactly the same for a proper science of ecology and evolution and many areas of biology. We need to know how many organisms there are, what they are, and where they are.

# China crosses a political watershed

*WHEN* rain falls on a forest, it splashes on the leaves, runs down the limbs, soaks into mosses and epiphytes, swells into the undergrowth and soaks about the roots to become absorbed by the tree, *writes Tim Radford.*

On a hot day, a tree will "drink" 50 gallons of water an hour: most of this finds its way back into the atmosphere. Multiply the process by the millionfold, and you can see why ecologists say that a forest acts as a huge sponge, holding rainwater and slowing its release. A forest saves water where it matters most: in what hydrologists call the watershed.

But when heavy rain hits bare landscapes, there is nothing to break the force. The rain rips away huge quantities of topsoil and carries it away as silt into the rivers. These run through plains that are homes to hundreds of millions, so rivers such as the Yangtze, the Yellow and the Mississippi are banked with dikes. But the silt settles on the river bed, raising river levels and making flooding ever more likely.

Last week the government of China announced that the catastrophic floods which have now taken thousands of lives, destroyed millions of homes, and wiped out tens of millions of hectares of crops, happened because China's forests have been cut down. It was a seminal moment. Environmental campaigners, foresters and water engineers had been saying this sort of thing for decades. What was different was that, for the first time, a government had actually said so too — one that speaks for almost one-fifth of the people on the planet.

According to the Worldwatch Institute in Washington, 85 per cent of the forests of the Yangtze river basin have now vanished. But forests do more than prevent floods. They also alleviate drought. It takes 1,000 tons of water to grow one ton of grain. When a forest "holds" water it also slowly releases water in the dry season. Around 70 per cent of China's grain is now grown on irrigated land. So China — any agricultural country, in fact — has two reasons for wanting to keep its forests.

But there is a third reason. By breaking the force of the rains, trees also slow soil erosion. This is now at calamitous levels worldwide. Farmers in Africa, Asia and South America lose 40 tons of topsoil per hectare every year. This is 40 times faster than it can possibly form. So the stuff flowing down the turbid, swollen Yangtze like brown Windsor soup today is also tomorrow's supper — and the next day's, and the next.

The Chinese have now banned logging in the upper Yangtze. But there is a more powerful reckoning to come. In the past 12 years, another billion mouths have been added to the world's population. Crop yields are not keeping pace. But population continues to grow. The world will need at least 200 million new hectares of cropland in the next 30 years to feed the planet. But there are only 93 million hectares available for farms to expand into — and most of these are forested.

You can see the dilemma: the Chinese will dam the floods if they take one decision, and damn themselves if they take another. Political pundits have a word for defining moments like this one. They call it a watershed. It could not be more appropriate.



**Letter from Kuala Lumpur** Janet Halliday

# Painting the town

A *MAN* stands on a crumbling second-floor window ledge, leaning out backwards as if balancing a sailboard against a hard wind. One hand grips the rickety wooden window frame; the other clutches a long pole, on the end of which a paintbrush is tied. Oblivious of the seething Chinatown traffic below him, which will flatten him if the fall doesn't kill him, he is repainting the façade of his shophouse.

Similar scenes are now commonplace throughout Kuala Lumpur. They are part of the "beautification" drive being undertaken to prepare this city, which normally is more concerned with growth and development than aesthetics, for September's Commonwealth Games.

Owners and tenants of premises anywhere near the Games Village, on major thoroughfares and in areas frequented by visitors, are being urged to spruce up their buildings. The change is most noticeable in Chinatown, in the heart of Kuala Lumpur, where shophouses which have been quietly mouldering for years have suddenly had a face-lift of blue, cream, white or pink paint. Neighbours which have not yet had the treatment demonstrate the "before" situation: flaking plaster, deep green lichen below leaking gutters, and the odd bush growing out of a crack.

Like all face-lifts, however, these are only skin-deep. Behind the façades the interiors are still shabby; heaps of onions, dried fish and garlic spill out on to the pavements, which are an obstacle course of changing levels; peel piles up around fruit-sellers' stalls; and the energetic market leaves the usual rubbish. Chinatown is too grubbily alive to be turned into a sanitised exhibit.

Elsewhere the city's parks, landscaped areas and highway borders, always well planted and immaculate, are having their lilies gilded. Gardeners, wearing floppy straw hats against the sun, are constantly sweeping, weeding, grass-trimming and planting. A hoarding which has been bordering a main road for months, if not years, has suddenly disappeared to reveal a whole new addition to the Lake Gardens, with pavilions, trees, flowers and shrubs. Lately, trees have also been planted along several suburban highways.

Some of the roads themselves have been beautified. Kuala Lumpur is building two light rail systems and a monorail to relieve its desperate road congestion. These, however, have exacerbated congestion on some major arteries as lanes have been coned off for the projects. The remaining lanes, burdened with even more traffic than usual, are increasingly smashed up.

The monorail caused the worst jams. Even when work on it was suspended in the economic crisis, the cones stayed put. Now, seemingly overnight, its on-site equipment has disappeared, the cones have been removed and the scarred lanes alongside it have been resurfaced. The affected roads have reverted to a width and smoothness almost forgotten, with a suddenness almost shocking.

A drive against littering is underway. On-the-spot fines, public-awareness campaigns, and new green plastic litter bins have been introduced. It takes time for attitudes to change, though, and so far there's little change in the amount of litter.

Even laundry has come under official scrutiny. Large, functional blocks of flats provide cheap housing for many, and the plain buildings are usually brightened by lines of colourful washing strung from their utilitarian balconies. The city is urging the residents not to dry laundry on their balconies during the Games, since the effect is "untidy and embarrassing".

KL's ubiquitous hawker stalls haven't escaped the onslaught. They are an institution, providing not only cheap, good food round the clock, but also an important place for socialising.

Plans to incarcerate them all in food centres before the Games have been only partially implemented, but since early this year all hawkers are supposed to have attended food hygiene courses. Local authorities have been making spot-checks to verify cleanliness, with hawkers who don't come up to scratch losing their permits until they clean up their act.

Recently all the hawker booths in our local "Rat Alley" closed down without warning. Huge consternation followed. Was this for ever? Where else, nearby, to go for satay, kway teow, nasi campur, mee goreng, fish-head curry and murtabak? To widespread relief they've now reopened, with new and uniform booths. The rats aren't back yet.

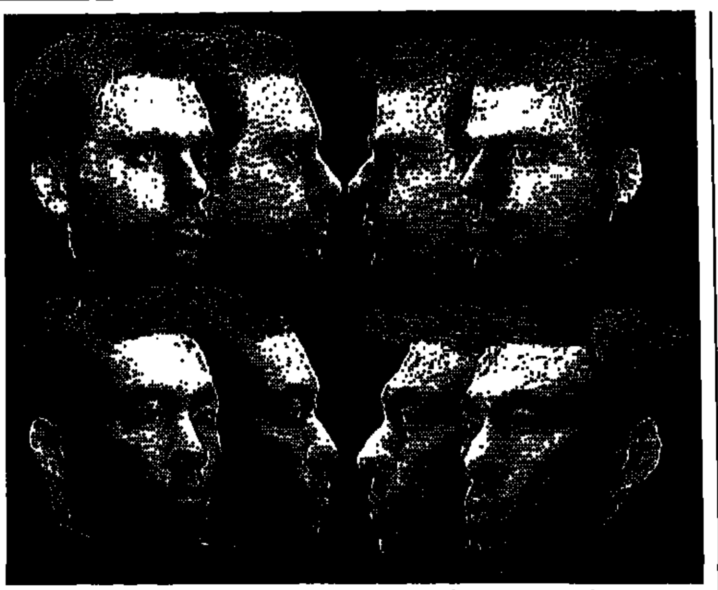
## A Country Diary

**Nigel Tappin**

*MUSKOKA, ONTARIO:* Heading into the nearest town, Huntsville, we saw a large animal standing beside the road. As it was poised to bound across, slowing seemed prudent. Could it be a large black dog? Its shape seemed wrong. A wolf? I've heard of black wolves.

As it took a loping stride across the two-lane highway, it came into focus. A light-coloured snout, pointed furry ears, sleek black fur fluffing out slightly from the body, an arched back, forelegs longer than rear; an ambling, ground-eating gait, combined to spell a small black bear *(Ursus americanus)*. Too old to call a cub and yet far too puny to be fully adult, it was reminiscent of a large wolf hound. Might its leanness have resulted from an adolescent growth spurt? Wild food is plentiful. The berry crops our ursine friends use to help bulk up for hibernation are abundant. If local lore is right, heavy berry yields mean a long winter to come.

The bear might be an orphan. Hunters sometimes shoot a mother, leaving cubs to fend for themselves. Local organisations like the Aspen Valley Wildlife Sanctuary can sometimes rescue them and feed them back to health and release, but many doubtless succumb. This thin chap displayed no dearth of energy. He cleared the Tarmac in two leaps, slid rapidly down the embankment, and disappeared into the green-brown wall of trees and brush.



Male faces 'morphed' to stress feminine, left, and masculine traits

Not too much testosterone: di Caprio beats Schwarzenegger

## Men taken at face value

**Tim Radford**

*RESEARCHERS* into human beauty have a shock for Macho Man and New Lad today. Men prefer women who look feminine. But Leonardo di Caprio has the edge over Arnold Schwarzenegger: women prefer men who look a bit feminine too.

David Perrett of the University of St Andrews caused a stir four years ago when he and colleagues analysed the lips, chins, noses and eyebrows of large groups of British and Japanese women and "morphed" them into average faces — and then used computers to make the faces "prettier" to test for attractiveness.

Now, reports Nature magazine, he has taken the research further, to address one of the mysteries of human biology: why men and women are more alike than different.

Male apes are much bigger than female apes. Male birds of paradise are gorgeous and females are not. Stags have big antlers, but does do not. But human males and females are quite close in size and often in facial detail.

This time Dr Perrett and his colleagues created "average" Scottish and Japanese male and female faces, again "morphed" them into more feminine and more masculine versions and showed them to volunteers in both countries. The outcome was the same whether the Japanese were shown Scots faces, or Japanese, and vice versa. There was a universal idea of female attractiveness — the more feminine version. But to the researchers' surprise, women in both countries voted against the ultra-male faces.

Dr Perrett thinks faces reveal a lot about fitness as a sexual partner. Testosterone forced male facial features — jaws and eyebrows — to become larger.

Women liked a face which spoke of testosterone, but not too much: ultramasculine faces were voted less attractive. "Testosterone of course relates to behaviour, and some of the behavioural attributes one associates with high testosterone are not so pleasant," he says.

The study suggests that what women looked for in a face might be the gentleness necessary in a parent and provider. A study of 4,000 US servicemen revealed that those with the highest testosterone levels were least likely to marry, and if they did were more prone to violence in the home and more likely to divorce. Dr Perrett's findings may explain why male humans have evolved to be more graceful, than say, male gorillas.

The research explains why, for women, Leonardo di Caprio is a bigger star than Arnold Schwarzenegger. But it does not answer all the questions. "We are talking about the majority of women the majority of the time. In future we ought to look at the variation in the tastes of individuals," he says.

## Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

***WHAT* was the longest single construction project ever successfully carried through by humans?**

*THIS* is complicated by the fact that there are lots of unfinished or recently finished churches that were started in the 13th-15th centuries. For example: the Duomo of Florence (started in 1294, finished in 1887, taking 593 years); Santa Croce in Florence (1294-1863); San Petronio in Bologna (started in 1390, still not finished).

If the church has been built on the foundations of a previous structure, then one could take the beginning of the earlier structure as the starting date.

San Pietro (St Peter's) was first started by Constantine in 322 on the graveyard supposed to be the burial place of Peter. It was finished in 1667, taking 1,345 years. But the Vatican has been extended and rearranged up to the present day, giving a time span of 1,676 years.— *David Singmaster, London*

***IS IT* really possible to break a wine glass by singing at a particular pitch and volume?**

*A RECENT* article in the German weekly Die Zeit stated that there is no documented instance of a person bursting a glass with the power of her or his voice. Caruso is rumoured to have done so, but his wife Dorothy always denied it. Wolfgang Eisenmenger, a Stuttgart physicist, breaks glasses in his lectures using a tone of 120 phons tuned to within one tenth of a hertz of the frequency of the glass. The human voice is only capable of at most 100 phons — this is acoustically 120 times less powerful than the tone Eisenmenger uses. — *Bruce Collins, Kiel, Germany.*

***IF THE* millennium bug were to cause many catastrophes and fatalities, would it be possible to prosecute individuals and companies involved in the computer and software business?**

*THE* real difficulty will be in proving whose fault any possible injuries resulting from systems failures are. For example, Britain's National Health Service has identified a problem with a program that automatically administers intravenous drugs. On the first day of the year 2000, the computer will read the date as 1900, and make an immediate safety shutdown.

If a situation such as this ends up with a patient fatality, proving culpability will be a tricky job, and the buck is unlikely to stop with the person who wrote the program. If an organisation is using lots of very old systems, the computer supplier could claim that the system was never designed to last beyond the turn of the century and, therefore, that it is unreasonable to blame them. The patient is likely to sue the NHS, and who they will sue is unclear — the only certainty is that it will be a litigation nightmare.

Perhaps the NHS will sue the Government for not giving them enough funds to deal with the problem in time. The Government may then be forced to take it to the highest level — in the State of Nevada the bug has been declared, for legal purposes, "an act of God". — *Rachel Sullivan, Editor, Financial Sector Technology magazine, London*

## Any answers?

***THERE* has been a great deal of hype about new words added to the lexicon in three recently published dictionaries, but what about old words? Which words — if any — have been removed? — *Sue Lester, Manchester***

***HAVING* recently visited Austria, I noticed that the diet on offer seemed to be a lot higher in meat and dairy products than typical in the UK. Is this true and does it have any ill effect on the population? — *Paul Wright, Basildon, Essex***

***WHY* is it only the finger tips and toes that go wrinkly when you have been in the bath too long? Would the rest of me go wrinkly if I stayed in the bath longer? — *Steve Baldock, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates***

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. The Notes & Queries website is at http://nq.guardian.co.uk/



# Fleet Street's last baron

## Lord Rothermere

*LORD ROTHERMERE,* the last of the old-style newspaper barons, who has died aged 73, was a mass of contradictions. He enjoyed the power of an autocrat but preferred to delegate. He knew what his papers should contain but had little clue how to achieve it. He proclaimed his love for Britain yet lived abroad to save paying British taxes. He was an passionate advocate of family values yet lived openly, until his first wife's death, with his mistress.

He believed in the need for privacy yet did nothing to discourage his editors from intruding into other people's. He paid lip service to respect for shareholder democracy while revelling in a stock arrangement which gave him total control of the company. He acted like a Tory and ensured his papers supported the Tories, but declared recently that he had never been a Tory and last year decided to take the Labour whip in the Lords.

Even by the standards of his extraordinary family and the eccentricities we have come to expect from members of his class, the flamboyant third Viscount Rothermere was a remarkable character. At turns he was courteous and cold, charming and infuriating, cunning and naive. Most of all, he loved to make mischief and it was this which concealed the answer to the question which so many posed about him: was he a very smart man who pretended to be otherwise, or a very stupid one who got lucky?

As the journalist Lynn Barber memorably pointed out in one of the rare interviews he gave, the "common verdict is that he is twice as clever as he looks, but only half as clever as he thinks". Certainly, it was obvious to everyone that Rothermere owed a great deal of his success to the man whose death he was still mourning when he died himself: Sir David English.

Rothermere was devastated at English's unexpected death in June. He regarded his former Daily Mail editor not only as a colleague but as a close friend. The secret of their many accomplishments lay in the complex dynamics of their partnership and it was to Rothermere's credit that he recognised that fact. Many other powerful proprietors, lured by giant egos into believing their empires depend alone on them, have been too ready to jettison equally talented people.

Vere Harmsworth was born into newspapers. His great-uncle, Lord Northcliffe, and his grandfather, the first Lord Rothermere, between them had created a mighty Fleet Street empire with a string of titles, including the Daily Mail, Daily Mirror, the Times, the Sunday Pictorial and the London Evening News. These two Harmsworth brothers, very different in interests and character, were the founders of Britain's most enduring family newspaper dynasty.

It was against this background of glittering success that Vere grew up. He was educated at Eton and, by his own account, did not shine. His only happy time, he later recalled, was the year he spent at Kent School, Connecticut, when he was evacuated in 1940.

He went to Canada in 1948, to work in a paper mill producing newsprint, before joining the family firm in Fleet Street in 1952. The great days of Northcliffe were long past. In 1940 his father, Esmond, had inherited the viscountcy and the papers, but little of his father's and uncle's magic touch.

The son watched unhappily as the father made mistake after mistake. But in 1956 he forged the friendship that was to be the key to his future good fortune. He helped the Daily Sketch's features editor, David English, to launch a win-a-pub competition. Meanwhile Vere fumed on the sidelines as his father, even when suffering from Alzheimer's, refused to relinquish his hold.

Vere finally took control in 1971, seven years before his father's death, and immediately set about reversing the Mail's decline. He merged the Sketch and the previously broadsheet Daily Mail, put English in the chair and decided to relaunch the new paper in a tabloid format.

The dream of a right-of-centre middle-class paper for a mythical Middle England gradually became a reality, with English as the driving force. Rothermere's first ambition was to overtake the Daily Express, then selling 1.6 million more. It took 15 years to achieve. Now the Mail is 1.2 million ahead.

Once confident of the Mail's success, Rothermere launched the Mail on Sunday in 1982. He was immediately unhappy with his initial choice of editor, fired him, and put his faith in English once again as temporary editor. That paper, in just 16 years, has become the most successful in its field, eclipsing the Sunday Express and overtaking two red-top rivals.

Rothermere's private life was just as colourful as his commercial one. In 1957 he married Patricia Brooks, a Rank starlet known to everyone (except Rothermere) as Bubbles. They had two daughters and a son. But by the late seventies, they were leading separate lives. While she stayed in London, he moved to Paris in 1978 with a Japanese-born Korean, Maiko Lee, who had previously worked as a hand model. But Rothermere resolutely refused to divorce and did not marry her until a year after Bubbles died of a heart attack in 1992. It was Maiko Lee who drew him towards Buddhism and a belief in reincarnation.

In recent years, Rothermere moved between homes in Paris, the south of France and New York. It is generally believed that his personal riches far surpassed those of all the other newspaper owners, but when asked by an interviewer how often he spent in London, he chided him for behaving like a tax inspector. Despite his many charitable gifts, his recent conversion to New Labour had not made him keener to contribute more of his money to the public purse.

**Roy Greenslade**

Vere Harold Esmond Harmsworth (Viscount Rothermere of Hemsted), newspaper proprietor, born August 27, 1925; died September 1, 1998

# A chip off the old block

THEATRE
**Michael Billington**

AN EDWARD ALBEE première is a big event. A new play, as the writer himself says in the programme, offers a challenge to audiences, critics, even the author. But, for all its verbal felicities, **The Play About The Baby**, at London's Almeida Theatre, resembles not so much a brand-new work as an anthology of familiar themes. This is the portable collection of Albee obsessions in a handy two-hour version.

We are confronted by four characters, simply identified as Boy, Girl, Man, Woman. Boy and Girl are passionate, sensual, newly married, protectively proud of their baby, yet filled with odd intimations of alarm. Enter middle-aged Man and Woman, who are whimsical, cynical, reflective, bound together, yet strangely separate. What do they want of the younger couple? The question is finally answered at the end of the first act when Man says: "We've come to take the baby."

Old Albee hands will recognise the emotional pattern of Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf? An older games-playing couple, themselves prey to illusion, gradually strip away the protective dreams of a younger pair. The key difference is that the earlier play was about the decline of a civilisation; this one is largely about the substitution of fantasy for reality.

But there are also strong echoes of Albee's recent work, Three Tall Women, in which we saw a single character divided into triple parts. Here there are strong hints that the older couple are viewing their naïve, impulsive, younger selves before being subjected to the corrosive batterings of time — even a suggestion that gender is approximate, and that Boy may grow into Woman, Girl into Man. But again one misses the dramatic resonance and clarity of the earlier triple image.

The play is more a treasure trove for Albee scholars and biographers than something of passionate universal concern.

But it lives in performance thanks to the ingenuity of Howard Davies's production and the skill of the actors. Frances de la Tour as Woman brilliantly shows the knack of communicating with the audience. Alan Howard also brings to Man the probing gaze of some allegorical Bunyanesque seeker after truth. And Rupert Penry-Jones and Zoë Waites get across both the innocent physical rapture and the ultimate spiritual disillusion of Boy and Girl.

Not, by any means, an unrewarding play, just one that gives the impression that Albee is cannibalising his own earlier work.

Yukio Ninagawa's Tokyo version of **Hamlet**, at London's Barbican Theatre, is not as revelatory as his famous, falling cherry-blossom Macbeth, but it's still a perfectly controlled aesthetic event. Clearly Ninagawa sees Hamlet primarily as a play about the mystery of theatrical illusion.

As we take our seats, the actors are strolling about sticking on false beards and examining costumes in front of mirrors. Eventually they retreat to 12 curtained recesses which double as their dressing-rooms and Elsinore, sometimes to startlingly ambiguous effect.

Ninagawa pushes the argument further to suggest that the whole play is like a Borgesian hall of mirrors. It is no accident that Hamlet emerges for his meditation on suicide from the same gap in the curtains where the Ghost has earlier returned from the grave.

As a display of theatrical aesthetics, the production is remarkable. Curtains flutter and blow, plangent music is distantly heard, actors are seen off-duty in disturbing silhouette. But the play's politics are subordinate to its theatricality. Tetsuro Sagawa's Claudius runs what in Pinter is always called "a tight ship" until the very end, when the invading Fortinbras turns out to be a sadistic thug: I don't know what significance this has in Japan but the notion of a quasi-Fascist Fortinbras has now become a directorial stock idea.

Difficult also to judge Hiroyuki Sanada's Hamlet unless you speak Japanese. He's at his most striking in the Closet Scene where he paws Mariko Kaga's excellent Gertrude with Freudian intensity. Even if it doesn't rewrite the history books, this Hamlet is a haunting meditation on the nature of action and acting.

**Adam Sweeting** meets Marianne Faithfull, wild child of the sixties turned Salzburg festival diva

# Wages of sin



Faithfull: 'I sing my shadow. I'm singing the dark side of myself'

PHOTOGRAPH: REDFERNS

IN THE early seventies, after her tenure as the angelic teenage siren of Britpop and Mick Jagger's glamorous rock-chick chattel had evaporated, Marianne Faithfull spent years living on the wall of a demolished building in Soho. She was lonely, confused and addicted to heroin. "I sat there day after day, high as a kite," she reminisced in her autobiography.

This demoralised Marianne could hardly have imagined that nearly 30 years later, she would find herself the toast of the Salzburg festival, mingling with crown princes and Herbert von Karajan's widow. It has been 11 years since she first performed Brecht and Weill's parable of commerce and compromise, The Seven Deadly Sins, but the longer she does it the better it gets. Her recording of the piece, made in Vienna last February, is released by RCA this month. Her live performance of it with the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra in Salzburg's Felsenreitschule last month was a landmark moment in Faithfull's dogged climb back from the brink.

We met the day after her Salzburg performance. There's more than a hint of the diva about La Faithfull, and the gleam in her eyes tells you she knows it. Although she nearly ended up on the slag heap of rock 'n' roll, she claims she never pictured herself as self-destructive. "No, alas, I am a natural-born fucking winner," she hoots, nursing a glass of wine and lighting a cigarette.

She's intrigued that, despite her epic detour through drugs, homelessness and brushes with death, she has somehow arrived where it was once intended she should. "If I hadn't been discovered and I hadn't made As Tears Go By, I was going to be a classical singer, and I have ended up exactly where I would have been anyway. Very peculiar. At my age, if I'd been a classical singer I would have done Mozart and Fidelio and all that, and by now I would have got to Kurt Weill. If it's there in the cards, it will be there anyway."

Her voice is husky and hoarse, but with an unmistakable note of aristocratic haughtiness. Her mother was Eva Sacher-Masoch, an Austro-Hungarian baroness and a ballet dancer in pre-war Berlin. Her father, Glynn, was a wartime agent for British Intelligence, and later created his own experiment in community living at Brazier's Park in Oxfordshire. Mr and Mrs Faithfull were disastrously mismatched, but the combination seems to have bred in Marianne a combination of bohemian iconoclast and reckless drama queen, with a hidden streak of will power.

It would be difficult to find a candidate better equipped to sing The Seven Deadly Sins. The central character, Anna, is sent from Louisiana by her family on a symbolic tour of America's big cities to earn enough money as a dancer to build them a luxurious house by the Mississippi. Anna is a dual personality, with Anna 1 the hard-boiled narrator, and Anna 2 the sensitive, easily manipulated dancer.

It's tempting to picture them as the two Marianne Faithfulls, one a battered but mature 51-year-old, the other the young girl who prompted Rolling Stones manager Andrew Oldham to comment: "I saw an angel with big tits and signed her."

WHILE her life has moved forwards in unforeseen ways, part of her will always remain inseparable from the associations of the sixties. Bianca Jagger was among the guests at her Salzburg party after the show. The day before she flew out to Salzburg, she attended the wedding of the daughter of Keith Richards and Anita Pallenberg, Angela, at Redlands, Richards's Sussex home where Marianne and the Stones were famously arrested in 1967.

In her autobiography, published in 1994, she made the observation: "All celebrities become burlesques of themselves in the end." Images of the Stones and David Bowie leap irresistibly to mind.

"That was a bit cruel," she says, "but I think it's sort of true. It's possible to be a sort of real artist and a caricature at the same time. But I'm more careful. I can't make myself into a huge rollercoaster money-making machine. I don't think I would survive. I make a living. I do all right."

In January, she'll release a new rock album. The tone of the songs is apparently darker than Dracula's crypt. "I watched this documentary that John Boorman made about Lee Marvin. On screen, Marvin was a very powerful character but very dark, and in real life he wasn't like that. Somebody asks him about that, and he says: 'I act my shadow.' So, I sing my shadow. I'm singing the dark side of myself."

Also on the horizon is a movie version of her autobiography, with rumours suggesting Uma Thurman or Michelle Pfeiffer for the title role. Faithfull sold the film rights to Jim Sheridan's company, Hell's Kitchen, and intends to stand back and let him get on with it. "I'm not precious about how people portray me, because they're not actually attacking me, only a projection of me. I think it could be a great film. It also means I can buy my flat in Dublin, if you wanna know." She's got it, so she might as well flaunt it.



# Ongoing acts of creation

EDINBURGH FESTIVAL
**Andrew Clements**

THERE were just six living composers represented in three weeks of concerts and operas in Edinburgh this year, a miserable showing of which the festival organisers should be thoroughly ashamed.

Their short-sighted timidity is accentuated by the policy that has developed over recent years of ghettoising new music into a single weekend.

Regular festivalgoers can be subjected to endless recitals of Wolf, or second-rate Verdi operas just because their libretti are based upon Schiller, but they are not allowed to hear any new works in the context of the standard repertory, it seems, for fear of their being tainted by the experience.

That the focus of the allotted two days was Pierre Boulez, who as a conductor has done more than anyone else to bring the music of the 20th century into common currency, only underlined the disjunction at the heart of the festival. Boulez conducted one concert with the Ensemble InterContemporain — a typical programme of Varèse, Stravinsky, Schoenberg and Ligeti alongside two works of his own — and was present in the audience for his masterpiece from the 1960s, Pli Selon Pli, impressively done by Valdine Anderson and the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra under Martyn Brabbins. He also attended the premiere of his latest work, Sur Incises, by the EIC under its principal conductor David Robertson, in a concert that also included Elliott Carter's Clarinet Concerto and the British première of Philippe Manoury's vivid and arresting Fragments Pour Un Portrait.

For many years Pli Selon Pli was one of Boulez's infamous "works in progress", a score that he was unwilling to sign off until he had worked out all the implications of its many-layered portrait of Mallarmé and his poetry, and Sur Incises is currently in that state too, a conception that has yet to reach its final form. The kernel was a piano piece, Incises, that he wrote for a competition in 1994; two years later, the first, 10-minute version of Sur Incises appeared.

The latest expansion lasts 35 minutes. It takes the two kinds of material from the original — rapid, toccata-like figurations that dance across the keyboard, sombre murmurings in the bass — and realises yet more of their potential.

The flat, murky acoustic of the Usher Hall inevitably blunted the edge of the glinting metallic soundworld but the sensuous resonance of the scoring survived.

It is still dominated by the virtuoso passage work of Incises, with marimbas and vibraphone criss-crossing the pianos in ever-changing patterns.

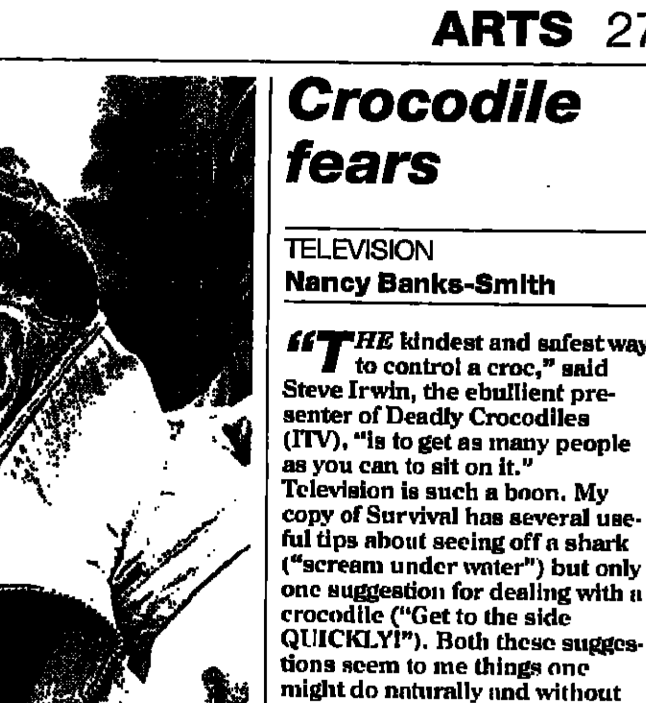
But there are oases of calm beauty too — ruminations for a battery of steel drums, the harps spinning a shimmering web, or combining with the drums in an unlikely, other-worldly sonority. The rhythmic energy is prodigious.

As always with Boulez the sense is of music forged at white-heat threatening to burst its formal boundaries, with the act of creation always as an ongoing process.



# Cutting edge of cinema

**OBITUARY**
Akira Kurosawa




Through a glass darkly . . . Kurosawa in 1980 on the set of Kagemusha

IN HIS honest, humane and wise autobiography, inspired by that of Jean Renoir, Akira Kurosawa, who has died aged 88, described a shattering experience in Tokyo when he was 13 years old: the Great Kanto earthquake of 1923. "Through it I learned not only of the extraordinary powers of nature, but extraordinary things that lie in human hearts."

The quake and the subsequent fire reduced two-thirds of the capital to ashes and took 140,000 lives. Kurosawa's family, living in a hill suburb of Tokyo, was lucky: though the house was damaged, the fires did not reach it. But there was no electricity, and when the neighbourhood's supply of candles was exhausted, the darkness was total and terrible. A rumour spread that Korean residents of the city were somehow responsible for the mayhem, and there was a massacre of Koreans in downtown Tokyo.

When the holocaust abated, a strong-willed elder brother took Akira on a day-long tour of the wasted and lifeless city. "I saw corpses charred black, half-burned corpses, corpses in gutters, corpses floating in rivers, corpses piled up on bridges, corpses blocking off a whole street at an intersection". Involuntarily, he looked away, but his brother insisted that he look carefully. Back home that night he slept like a log. He asked his brother how it could happen. He told Akira: "If you shut your eyes to a frightening sight, you end up being frightened. If you look at everything straight on, there is nothing to be afraid of."

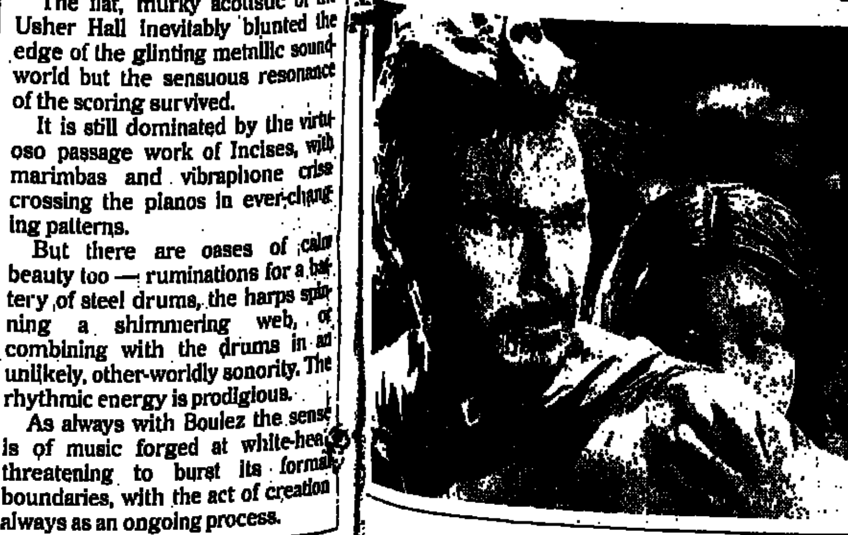
Though the adult Kurosawa was characteristically reticent about this, it is difficult not to see it reflected in his more than 30 feature films about past and present Japan, which abound in both baseness and nobility, savagery and sophistication, on an epic scale. Films such as Rashomon, Ikiru (Living), The Seven Samurai, Throne Of Blood, The Hidden Fortress and Dersu Uzala are among the most powerful movies ever made. Not only was their creator Japan's greatest film director, he was one of the greatest 20th century artists working in any medium.

Kurosawa was born in Tokyo, the youngest of seven children. His mother was from an Osaka merchant community, his father from a samurai family which hailed from a village in the northern part of Honshu. Kurosawa admired his mother for her power of endurance and her "realism", but it was his father, a romantic, who really influenced him.

His father was "a strict man of military background" who taught martial arts, helped to build Japan's first swimming pool and worked to make baseball popular. He encouraged his son's ability in kendo swordsmanship, and the young Kurosawa, despite being quite weak as a child, reached the first rank as a swordsman: the source of the inside knowledge that would enable him to stage enormously exciting duels in films such as The Hidden Fortress, Yojimbo and Rashomon.

But the true samurai spirit — *bushido* — inculcated by his father always mattered more to Kurosawa than the samurai's outward trappings. Donald Richie, Kurosawa's leading Western interpreter, defined it thus: "compassionate steadfastness, complete moral honesty, inability to compromise, and action through belief".

When Hollywood borrowed The Seven Samurai to make The Magnificent Seven, and Sergio Leone borrowed Yojimbo to make A Fistful Of Dollars — thereby launching Clint Eastwood as the "Man With No Name" — Kurosawa (though a keen admirer of John Ford) was not impressed. Japanese samurai had been replaced by Wild West gunmen who were basically gangsters. Samurai are the total opposite of gangsters, said a wry Kurosawa. But these Westerns had turned them into men nearly as worthless as their enemies, the bandits who were attacking the townspeople.



**The true samurai spirit inculcated by his father always mattered more to Kurosawa than the samurai's outward trappings**

Toshiro Mifune and Machiko Kyo in Rashomon

After leaving school, Kurosawa dabbled in many arts, read voraciously both Japanese and Western literature, particularly the Russian classics — he later adapted Dostoevsky and Gorky — and saw a large number of films under the tutelage of his elder brother, who had established himself as a successful narrator for silent film.

Kurosawa showed real promise as a painter and began selling illustrations to magazines. He also was loosely associated with a revolutionary proletarian movement, though communism did not make much impression on him. It never crossed his mind to become a filmmaker until he happened to notice an advertisement by the young film studio P C L (later Toho) asking for assistant directors. Despite having no university degree and little demonstrable achievement, Kurosawa was selected.

THE years at Toho, from 1936 until he directed his first film Sanshiro Sugata in 1943, were gruelling for Kurosawa, but they gave him experience of almost every aspect of film-making.

The beginning of the Pacific war and Kurosawa's "desperate battle to become a director" coincided. By August 1945, he had managed to complete four features, working in the teeth of military censorship. The most innocuous scene might be rejected as "British-American" while the use of march music by Sousa, the famous US bandleader, would pass unnoticed.

As for the war itself, Kurosawa offered no resistance to Japanese militarism, which shamed him then and afterwards. On August 15, 1945, walking to the studio to hear Emperor Hirohito's surrender broadcast, he saw the preparations for mass suicide; shop-owners were staring at the bare blades of their unsheathed swords. On the way back, the very same people were bustling about with cheerful faces.

"I don't know if this represents Japanese adaptability or Japanese imbecility," he wrote in 1981. "In either case, I have to recognise that both these facets exist in the Japanese personality. Both facets exist within my own personality as well."

Rashomon, made in 1950, brought Kurosawa, and indeed Japanese cinema as a whole, to the attention of a curious world. Shown at the Venice Film Festival in 1951, the film was a sensation and carried off the Grand Prix. In India, it helped to inspire a would-be director later deeply admired by Kurosawa, Satyajit Ray, who called Rashomon "the kind of film that immediately suggests a culmination, a fruition, rather than a beginning. You could not — as a film-making nation — have a Rashomon and nothing to show before it."

The 15 years after Rashomon were Kurosawa's golden period. His finest film of all (and his own favourite), The Seven Samurai (1954), seems to contain the whole of human experience in the relationships that develop between a village and the samurai hired by the villagers to defend themselves from pillage by ruthless robbers.

It is an action picture to end all action pictures, a hymn to movement, but it is also profound philosophy. Plot and psychology are here in a perfect balance, never quite achieved by Kurosawa again.

After 1965, Kurosawa's career went into steep decline. His magnificent lead actor, Toshiro Mifune, left him because of his mammoth shooting schedules. The high cost of his film antagonised Japanese producers. And though his audiences in Japan were generally favourable, the Japanese press throughout his career accused him of purveying an exotic Japan to the West. This was both wounding and wilfully blinkered, given the rapid and rather mindless westernisation of Japan after the war, which Kurosawa much disliked.

Eventually, after a widely publicised falling out over a Hollywood mega-project in 1968 and a commercial flop with a Japanese-financed small-budget film, Kurosawa attempted suicide in 1971. His fortunes revived with Russian help (Dersu Uzala), French help (Ran), and the backing of younger Hollywood directors, Francis Ford Coppola and George Lucas (Kagemusha) and Steven Spielberg (Dreams, in which Martin Scorsese had a small acting role). But, enchanting, gorgeous, cruel and grand as all these films variously are, they lack Kurosawa's former vitality.

Nevertheless we have the masterpieces, which will never be forgotten. They are how Kurosawa, an extremely private man, wanted to be remembered.

**Andrew Robinson**

Akira Kurosawa, film director, born March 23, 1910; died September 6, 1998



# Crocodile fears

TELEVISION
**Nancy Banks-Smith**

**"THE kindest and safest way to control a croc," said Steve Irwin, the ebullient presenter of Deadly Crocodiles (ITV), "is to get as many people as you can to sit on it." Television is such a boon. My copy of Survival has several useful tips about seeing off a shark ("scream under water") but only one suggestion for dealing with a crocodile ("Get to the side QUICKLY!"). Both these suggestions seem to me things one might do naturally and without being prompted in any way.**

**Steve's method requires as many mates as you can find prepared to ride a crocodile bareback and, in a situation like this, you soon find out who your mates are.**

**Being the cheerful and fizzingly enthusiastic chap he is, like an exceptionally large seven-year-old, Steve had eight mates who, at the word of command, sat on the croc. That's about one mate per two feet of crocodile. ("From here on in, if he starts to react, we're gonna have to ride it out. Just hang on!") Under assorted bush hats, I spotted Duggie, Ronnie, Barry, Terri, Shelley and Wes. Terri (as in "Run, Terri! Run!") was Steve's young wife.**

**The croc was a big male. "Holy smoking dog shit!" breathed Steve when he first saw it, parting the green water with the bumps on its back. It dominated a Queensland waterhole which was also popular with fishermen.**

**When a crocodile challenges man, the most optimistic outcome is that it will be caught and moved hundreds of miles to a more remote area. Rather like a transported convict, now you mention it. Unfortunately crocodiles, like Australians, have an exceptional homing instinct and are apt to boomerang back.**

**Steve had a better idea. He was going to try reforming a crocodile by aversion therapy.**

**First catch your croc. For this you will need a net and a dead pig. They caught him, made him comfortable and left him.**

**At night they came back in a motor boat, roaring round and round, strafing him with the machine-gun rattle of the engine. "I want him to associate humans and boats and lights with this night in the trap," said Steve. The croc lay like a log.**

**Next morning they let him go. He staggered like an animal coming out of anaesthetic but Steve had not drugged him, tagged him nor fitted him with a radio transmitter.**

**Three months later, the crocodile was difficult to locate. When they found him ("It's the big bloke himself!") he did not linger. Whether he had learned to avoid humans is uncertain. It seems much easier to teach humans to avoid a crocodile.**

**I once asked a snake dancer if her python was house-trained. She said you couldn't house-train a snake.**

**This is quite irrelevant but oddly memorable.**

# The tale of a tub thumper

**Terry Eagleton**

Jonathan Swift
by Victoria Glendinning
Hutchinson 324pp £20

*THE* English mania for biography rages on. As a nation, we seem less interested in ideas than in the sexual habits of those who had them. The narratives we relish are not fictions, but the real-life stories of fiction-makers. This is an odd preference, since writers' lives are not necessarily more enthralling than those of pharmacists. The events that really matter in a writer's life are acts of writing, and literary biographies, with a few distinguished exceptions, are the last place one would go for incisive analyses of these. Victoria Glendinning's new biography of Swift devotes more space to his Anglo-Irish accent than it does to his satirical masterpiece A Tale Of a Tub.

There is a strange contradiction at work here. Writers can be glamorous, legendary figures, which is what tempts us to peer behind the works to the individual. But since it was the works that made them glamorous and legendary in the first place, this turns out to be a self-defeating exercise. We wouldn't be interested in whether Samuel Beckett smoked Gauloises if he hadn't written the likes of Endgame, but whether he smoked Gauloises has no relevance to Endgame at all.

Biographers like to imagine that their subjects are unique; but this is belied by the very structure of their books, which move predictably from parentage, birth and education to career, progeny and death, shaped more by the dictates of biology than by the unfurling of some free spirit. The English love a character, just as they love a lord; but what the biographical form betrays is just how much these supposedly inimitable characters have in common.

A lot of biography is a kind of highbrow nosiness; but the form combines the shapeliness of fiction with the flavour of real life, and so exerts a charm. Victoria Glendinning is certainly charmed by Jonathan Swift, a man she sees as representing in some ways "moral true north". Since Swift was a sectarian bigot with an extravagant contempt for his fellow humans, a man who clung to the shirt-tails of the powerful in ruthless pursuit of his own self-advancement, one wonders what Glendinning's idea of moral south might be. He was also, of course, one of the finest satirists of world literature; but it might be kinder to remember him as that, rather than as the embittered opportunist behind the prose.



Swift: a social climber with a strong contempt for other men MARY EVANS

Like all biographies of Swift, this one is forced into a lot of rather humdrum detail about 18th century politics. Even so, Glendinning insists that her protagonist escapes such vulgar labels as Whig and Tory, conservative and radical. Like all great English eccentrics, he can't be pigeonholed because he is purely, uniquely himself. Taken seriously, this tautology would spell the death of all biography; but in Swift's case it is more than usually off-beam. A few enigmatic issues apart — Was he a Jacobite? Was he celibate? — Swift is all too easily pigeonholed. He was a fanatical High Churchman who believed firmly in the suppression of Catholics and Dissenters, and despite his strategic, self-interested shifts between Whigs and Tories, preached a fairly unremarkable brand of conservatism. It was out of that benighted, rather brutal philosophy that he conjured some of the most deviously aggressive literature in English.

Glendinning's claim that he was in some ways "radical" is quite hollow. He may have written magnificently against militarism, but he was no pacifist. He may have been a doughty champion of Irish liberty, but as this book notes, the liberties in question were largely those of his own supremacist Anglo-Irish caste in Ireland. If Swift ended up as a darling of the plain people of Ireland, he also felt for them the kind of contempt which the high-minded Houyhnhnms of Gulliver's Travels reserve for the disgustingly bestial Yahoos.

Glendinning would like to believe that her nobly disinterested Dean was lured into political partisanship by such Tory grandees as Harley and St John, a claim that overlooks the visceral prejudice he displayed before he ever ran into them. The image of this hard-nosed political chancer as a victim, as gullible as his own Gulliver, is especially incongruous. Swift never had a disinterested feeling in his body, and much of his work is all the finer for it.

New lives of well-documented figures can be justified either if they give us fresh facts or an original angle. This book does neither. And its chatty, unsculptured style lacks the felicities that might redeem it. Glendinning tells us that she is not delivering a "chronicle biography" of Swift but a "written portrait", a claim that turns out to be untrue. Much of the book is indeed the kind of blow-by-blow history provided with greater richness by Irvin Ehrenpreis's magisterial three-volume biography. As for the portrait, what is striking is just how little probing of Swift's interior life goes on. For all its fascination with the man, Glendinning's treatment is oddly external: the reader emerges with a close knowledge of what Swift did, but hardly any idea of what he believed. The ingrained anti-intellectualism of English biography is much in evidence, and this in the case of an ideologue who helped to draft the monarch's speeches to Parliament.

Where the book excels is in the brief cameo, the vividly crafted detail. It is better on wigs than Whigs, pointing out how soggy and smelly they got in the rain. It is knowledgeable about how to worm your way into the 18th century court, and sketches a memorable portrait of Swift stumping the back lanes of Dublin's Liberties, trading witticisms with the poor.

But the narrative never lets up to gives us a psychological overview of this pathological, profoundly disturbed genius. This, ironically, is true of a man who feared and mocked interiority, who seemed as a clergyman to have no spiritual life to speak of, and who admired above all the plain-minded, business-like and pragmatic. But Swift is also the author whose writing was described by William Thackeray as "horrible, shameful, unmanly, blasphemous . . . furious, raging, obscene"; and though this book valuably puts the old chestnut of Swiftian scatology into perspective — there isn't, as Glendinning sensibly reminds us, all that much of it — it doesn't begin to grapple with the physical perversities of a man who defended moderation with such crazed excess.

## Paperbacks

Desmond Christy

**After Darwin, by Timberlake Wertenbaker (Faber, £6.99)**

*PLAYWRIGHTS* have cause to fear a cultural evolution in which screenwriters are the dominant species. Wertenbaker contributes to the vigour of the theatre with this drama of ideas in which the captain of the Beagle, Robert Fitzroy, learns to regret taking Charles Darwin on board. Cleverly we see both the struggle of Fitzroy and Darwin's ideas and the moral consequences of Darwinian ideas as the actors assigned these roles find themselves in a dog-eat-dog world. There's even a part for a Tamagotchi — a blasphemous creation, Captain Fitzroy would have thought.

**Mastering Shakespeare, by Richard Gill (Macmillan, £10.99)**

*MR GILL* — as I knew him when I imagined myself the unhinged Hamlet of the lower sixth — was always an enthusiastic, interesting and encouraging teacher. Mastering Shakespeare is an unintimidating (lots of blobs and subheadings) and stimulating introduction for those who are about to "do" the Bard. Those looking for a crib should seek elsewhere; those who want a book that helps them enjoy their set play and be persuaded to read others will find what they need here.

**Are You Somebody? The Life and Times of Nuala O'Faolain (Sceptre, £6.99)**

*A BOOK* full of anguish, compassion, and hope for a happy future. The first edition sold more than 100,000 copies in Ireland and comes to us with praise heaped on it by Roddy Doyle, Edna O'Brien and Colm Toibin. It takes real guts to be as honest as Faolain is about herself and her family; maybe you need to be even braver to be so candid about Ireland itself. This edition has been extended to include a selection of the author's journalism.

**Britain on the Couch: Treating A Low Serotonin Society, by Oliver James (Arrow £6.99)**

*YOU* have to admire a clinical psychologist who puts an entire nation on the couch — and for such a modest fee. Your heart — sorry, your serotonin levels — may sink as you read James's account of our society, one in which capitalism has taughts us to think of everything as if we were ranking it for a Which? report — "death by a thousand comparisons" as James puts it. Who is the best example of a "low serotonin individual"? None other than Bridget Jones: "If this book explains anything, it explains why Bridget Jones is so unhappy".



# The quick and the dead

**Tim Radford**

The Raptor And The Lamb: Predators And Prey In the Living World
by Christopher McGowan
Penguin Press 272pp £18.99

*PREDATORS* have to be quick. If they are to survive, so do their prey. So predators also have to be smart. That is why lions stalk — become stealth weapons — and then judge the shortest possible distance across which to strike, because lion can accelerate to 30 mph inside a 50-yard distance. With surprise on her side, she — it's usually she — stands a better chance. The zebra has learned to be smart, too: zebras can run at 40 mph. So even if they spot a lion, zebras just carry on munching, and don't start getting twitchy until the distance has narrowed to what a zebra judges to be dangerous. Zebras are also big, so they have to be tackled, rugby style, to be brought down. The neck is too thick to snap, so having got the zebra on the ground, the lioness has to kill by asphyxiation: by clamping her jaws on the poor brute's windpipe.

This is yet another good book about life and death. Reptiles are not such cold-blooded killers, at least, not when cold: the safest place to keep a cobra is the fridge. Food, however, is not a big item for reptiles: mammal hunters have to consume maybe 30 times their own weight each year to stay alive: a python can go two or three months without eating, though when it does, it thinks big. It tunes up its metabolic clock: its small intestine grows 50 per cent in six hours, and its lungs double in weight within 14 days: thus armed, it can swallow and digest its own bodyweight, storing its rare but filling dinner as fat (there really is a snake oil) until it feels peckish again.

Sperm whales are slow-cruising carnivores: they prefer squid, which being jet-propelled have many times the acceleration. But the sperm whale may have invented the stun gun: its sonar system is surely for more than just long-distance communication, or echolocation. A rock concert generates 120 decibels, and a jet engine peaks at 160 dB, which is serious pain. Sperm whales can "click" at 265 dB. An explosive like TNT only generates 230 dB in water. So did Moby Dick simply knock his supper out first, and dine at leisure?

Books like this, by stunning us with the details we can measure, also alert us to how little we really know. The chameleon creeps along twigs with the slowness of death, which is why it has to change colour with its surroundings. Stealth is one of its its prime weapons. The other is its tongue, which stretches up to about a foot, but can accelerate to 13 mph in 20 thousandths of a second to take a fly on the wing. If this acceleration continued for a whole second, the tongue tip would achieve a speed of 1,000 mph.

How do they do it? How did spiders get to turn out imprisoning silk with twice the tensile strength of the same weight of steel, ten times tougher than Kevlar? What immortal hand or eye gave the swift the wings of a fighter aircraft, or fitted out the tiger moth with a sonar-jamming system that sends a predator bat off target? Life's richness is what is precise, because there are so many ways of becoming dead, which must be matched by so many ways of staying alive. Even the prey have prey, usually plants. And plants have their own ways of staying alive — quinine, morphine, codeine, atropine and penicillin and a few thousand other things are all natural defences evolved over millions of years by vegetables and fungi.

Meanwhile, in a mere 200,000 years, *Homo sapiens* has become the ultimate predator and one quarter or even half of all species could be on the way to extinction. But there is a huge and inexorable lesson running through this book, which is by a curator of palaeobiology in Toronto. The lesson is this: the prey needs its predator to keep the population under control, and when the prey goes, the predator goes too.



# Dying fall to a special relationship

**Andrew Stephen**

51st State
by Peter Preston
Viking 279pp £15.99

*THIS* unusual and entertaining novel begins with an agitated old man on his deathbed in Dorset, gasping out an embittered sadness that his beloved country has changed so much for the worse during his lifetime: "There's nothing of England left but pots in the curiosity shop," he pleads breathlessly to the glib, bored son waiting for him to die. Then we discover why: the son is an upwardly mobile Tory cabinet minister and his father's dying wish is that his own son could and should do something about what he sees as inexorable national decline.

We realise immediately that we have been propelled into a Britain of the future — nearly three decades after the collapse of the Blair government, apparently, though we can only speculate whether this means 2029, say, or 2039. "Willie Hague" is also but a distant memory, recalled mainly for the famous case of Hague v. the Sun that led to the Protection of Personal Information Act. The Foreign Office is in Brussels, the euro the only currency known to any Briton under 30; the G7 has become the G10, the UK has long since lost its permanent place on the UN Security Council, and the European Union has expanded into a 33-nation, German-led bureaucracy.

Politically, our cabinet minister friend is a shallow man whose very vacuity leads to repeated promotions which take him ultimately to No 10; personally, he is trapped in a loveless marriage in which he is repeatedly cuckolded by a more clever, opportunistic wife. But the death of his father gives this novel its immediate underlying counterpoint: the piercing honesty and intensity of the father's beliefs versus mindless political expediency and scheming. For the minister, the rationalisation is that a British government repeatedly playing Westminster against Brussels and vice versa has two power bases rather than one and is thus more powerful — but his father's death changes him in ways he cannot comprehend.

This is the first novel by Peter Preston, who was editor of the Guardian for two decades. That background gives it two noticeable advantages. First, Preston has a better inside knowledge than most of how cynical and ruthless British politics really is — and how the media is led along, hopelessly riding its waves. He conveys all this with occasionally biting cameos, showing us (for example) how a completely fictitious news story comes to be spin-doctored as fact on the BBC's Nine O'Clock News. There are some wicked digs at the thriving News Corp Inc left by the late Rupert Murdoch, too: now it is run by a camp young man who still dictates to the Times how politics must be covered. Second, the book is carefully structured and often beautifully written — even if there are occasional misprints befitting a work by a former editor of the Grauniad.

Preston is less sure-footed, though, when it comes to American politics. His US politicians are invariably crude, foul-mouthed, gum-chewing sons-of-bitches who spit and curse; they cannot utter a sentence without at least one "ain't," and they rarely speak grammatically. Anyone who lives in Georgetown would be surprised to discover that you go "down" the "Pike" to Bethesda rather than up Wisconsin Avenue. And any male politician who addressed an American woman television interviewer as "my dear" would be instantly shredded even today, let alone in 2029 or 2039.

But Preston none the less brilliantly captures the prevailing, patronising attitude of the US government towards its British counterpart — one so few Britons see or are willing to accept. "Never kick an ancient retainer in the teeth," is how his US president views relations with Britain; for him, brunch at Chequers with the British prime minister is a chore not unlike "hospital visiting". Too near the bone for the British, possibly?

This is an engrossing, amusing tale. Preston is brave to have made himself vulnerable by producing a novel — even bringing in lesbian love scenes and suchlike — when he could have rested on his journalistic laurels. What is so striking, though, is how 20 years of editing a national newspaper has given him so jaundiced a view of the workings not just of politics, but of the media in which he has played such a prominent role in modern Britain. Is he, perhaps, trying to tell us something?

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £13 contact CultureShop (see page 28)

# Theme-park authenticity

**Andrew Marr**

England, England
by Julian Barnes
Cape 270pp £15.99

*THAT* England has become a theme-park nation is a chattering-class cliché. It is also at least partly true. There is no English crisis, but there is a problem. In England, everything becomes a tradition, and that includes the confection of tradition. But the quantity of contemporary repackaging is remarkable. It wraps itself around us all, like gaudy, omnipresent plastic — knightly tournaments, Robin Hood rambles, Battle of Britain days, Shakespeare's Globe. This, of course is hardly unique to England. But here the pastiche is also political. We have monarchs arriving to open Parliament in gilded coaches, and bold barons who are not Terry-Thomas actors but real people who vote in a functioning political chamber. Other countries have theme parks. But as any visitor to London will confirm, England itself can feel like one.

Yet the English passion for dressing up is matched by growing unease about nationhood. Julian Barnes has taken this spirit of the time and further distilled it into one of the oddest novels you are likely to read this year. It's what they call a romp but it is written in anger. There is a short first section, exquisitely done, about a girl's damaged childhood. There is a longer central satire in which a tycoon takes over the Isle of Wight and turns it into a giant theme park of English history. Then there is a brief fantasy about England in retreat, a place of organic farms and the occasional steam locomotive. The tone alters, disturbingly, from one section to the next. The central part is more cartoon-like, more Tom Sharpeish, than anything Barnes has done before. The colours are primary, the outlines crude, the jokes obvious. For people who like this sort of thing, this is the sort of thing they like: the Isle of Wight's buildings are mostly demolished, then it gets a fake parliament, peasants, fake London fog, Di's grave, Stonehenge, and so on.



Julian Barnes: a romp written in anger PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN REARDON

A new royal couple, including the improbably-named Queen Denise, move there. So do Manchester United. It declares independence and becomes a world tourist attraction, known as The Island — or as England, England. It is "everything you imagined England to be, but more convenient, cleaner, friendlier, and more efficient". It is also much more popular.

The heritage industry is an easy target. Barnes doesn't miss, though it was mildly amusing to read the breathless promise on the back of my proof copy: "Huge full colour advertising . . . Splendid mobiles of the island . . . 18-copy dump-bin and header . . . Author tour." Next stop, the Julian Barnes Experience?

By the final section, the tone has shifted again. Old England suffers economic collapse. The Scots buy the northern counties and the Welsh, Shropshire and Herefordshire. Scheming Europeans isolate England from the continent. By which time, I felt, Barnes's satire had curdled into an exhibition of self-pity reminiscent of a meeting of the UK Independence Party. Then the English turn ruralist, and the mood changes again.

Barnes's deep theme is the search for authenticity. What is real? Is it what we think we know of our history, what we think we remember? A Baudrillardian world of mimicry and theme-park falsity threatens life itself, Barnes argues, because it cuts away at our capacity for seriousness. In a key passage, Martha explodes: "Look what's happened to Old England. It stopped believing in things. Oh, it still muddled along. It did OK. But it lost seriousness." That's the proposition behind this book. The search for authenticity, in an increasingly unreal world, is worth it. It's the search for life itself. I said this was odd. Nothing could be odder than such a cartoonish romp whose real concern is seriousness. But this is both ambitious and serious — real, if you like. Dive at those dump-bins.

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £13 contact CultureShop (see page 28)

# Enveloped in Manila

**Andy Beckett**

The Tesseract
by Alex Garland
Viking 225pp £9.99

*THERE* are very few verbs at the start of this novel. In a derelict hotel, a man called Sean is waiting to ambush some gangsters; he is in a suburb of modern Manila, growing stickier with the dusk; he is nervous. Entire sentences, even paragraphs, are composed of single words or phrases: "Heat." "And Blood." "No other guests." The Filipino gangsters take quite a time to arrive. As Sean fiddles with his gun, and stares at the cracks in the ceiling, the relentlessly hyped-up pages begin to jar a little. Everything is too stylised — the bare bulbs, the skittering cockroaches, the mute concierge downstairs, with his "sweat-soaked cigarette" — as if art-directed for a particularly ominous advertisement.

All this is exactly as a sceptic about Alex Garland would expect. His previous, first novel, The Beach, despite its swell of sales and acclaim, had a whiff of the calculated yarn about it. It was about backpackers in Thailand, just when travelling there was fashionable; it borrowed from the great literary boys' tales like Heart Of Darkness and Lord Of The Flies; but it was as unsubtle as a traditional thriller.

At first, The Tesseract does not seem afraid of clichés either. Before Sean's showdown, we learn via a flashback, he "kills time" at an air-conditioned McDonald's, "armed with a milkshake". Don Pepe, the head gangster, keeps matchsticks in a silver case, to chew on like a Bond villain. His Mercedes "purred".

Then the book starts to relax and broaden. Don Pepe is stuck in traffic. His subordinates pass the blame around, hide behind their thick headrests, whisper and nod out of earshot. Quietly, the opening premise starts to shift around.

Don Pepe is the first to die in the hotel shoot-out. Sean scrambles away into its maze of corridors. Contrary to convention, he finds himself unable to run very fast: his adrenaline refuses to come. And then the novel dives off into another plot altogether.

In the next suburb, a rich mother is waiting for her husband to get back from work. He is in the traffic jam too, shouting reassurances down his mobile phone. She is worrying about the distant gunshots. She keeps going back to the fridge for ice cream. For a conjuror of adventures and exotica, Garland picks out this domestic fragility surprisingly well. The rich family's garden is groaning with blossom, just waiting to fall.

Garland is working up a panorama. After the comfortable and the criminal, he does the poor: a pair of street kids, Totoy and Vincente, scamper into both stories as wide-eyed observers. The detail of this starts to resonate in the best Dickensian manner. Manila becomes more than a travel-book backdrop: a great modern stew of a city.

The only problem is, The Tesseract needs an ending. For the last 30 pages, Garland twists and ties all his plot strands into a single knot of coincidence. His excuse is in the title: a tesseract, he slightly ponderously explains, is the three-dimensional shape you get when a "hypercube" — an unknowable four-dimensional entity — is unravelled. Likewise, the characters here are all fated to see a different fraction of the world around them. Sean and his pursuers, and the middle-class couple, and the pair of inquisitive urchins — all of them stumble out under the blossom, baffled, and into the final gun battle.

The climax strains. This is fitting. If the promotion of Alex Garland, with his young stubble and low-lit photos, has been like a rock star's, then The Tesseract is his difficult second album: worked-on, a welcome widening of possibilities, but less coherent and daring than it thinks it is. As one of its more nebulous sentences begins, "Everything weird was the bottom line . . . ". You never learn quite what it all means.

ILLUSTRATION: BARRY LARKING

# Wiggling, wriggling terror

**Paul Evans**

*THE* swifts and swallows were gone in early August, but the house martins are still here. Even with the shortening of days and a colder edge to mornings, the martins seem spellbound by the lazy, harvest days of late summer, reluctant to begin the long journey south until they have to. The notion of autumn becomes more of a palpable presence. You can see and taste it in the ripening fruit and seeds, and you can hear it in the wild voices.

A family of buzzards, sometimes four or five, launch into the wind. As they hang and wheel in the sky they call out. The young buzzards have not developed the plaintive mewing cry of the adults. Theirs is an insouciant but challenging call, a sharp, blading yell which seems not just addressed to each other but to the whole landscape and its inhabitants. Ravens croak, rooks rasp and at night shuddering hoots of tawny owls bind the dark woods under countless stars. The sounds these birds make are deceptively simple compared with the complex vocabulary of songbirds, but they have a power that strikes deep. There's something about the way these calls are received that is not captured by our rational understanding of the animals which make them.

Sounds that set the blood racing embody a strangeness of the wild which finds a thrilling place within us. But there are stranger things. As I rummage about in a hedgebank, something dark falls in front of me. It has snake-like markings of black lattice over green and grey; a sharp tail spike and its great bulbous head has two pairs of enormous staring eyes. It begins to twitch and thrash from side to side, raising its head from which a long trunk emerges. This is a real surprise, and although it takes me a second or two to realise what this thing really is, I'm amazed by its shock value. The monster is the larva of the large elephant hawk moth, and it had been feeding on willowherb leaves when I disturbed it.

The larva's response is to frighten off would-be predators until it becomes the beautiful green and willowherb-pink moth. We tend to think of its defensive shock tactics as merely subterfuge, a strategy to avoid being eaten. Some insects have bright colours to warn that they are poisonous; some mimic other insects which are either poisonous or have a defensive sting or bite; and some use sophisticated camouflage. Fat and succulent, the elephant hawk moth larva's body is as rich and ripe as the damsons falling from surrounding trees, and it would make a good meal for a large range of birds, reptiles, mammals and other insects. The secret of its power to shock lies not just in the strange thrashing movements but in the visual display. By flashing the forward-facing eye markings on the bulbous head and the sting-like spike at the rear, the larva becomes a chimera: part mammal, part reptile, part insect.

This defensive display of this wiggling grub might seem a bit comic if you know what it is, but like the sound of birds that echo in the human imagination and so enter our mythologies, it has a significance beyond our rational understanding of the creature itself. The larva's surprise works, if only for a few seconds, as we rifle through what we know about such creatures for an explanation that protects us from it. Even if you do know that the animal is wearing a disguise, you may be tempted to ask, what nightmare creature does it disguise itself as? What kind of monster lurks within our imaginations that confronts us in the appearance of this thing? Whatever it is, it's out there.

## Chess Leonard Barden

*THE* recent Hampstead international festival at University College School was the most ambitious production yet for Adam Raoof, the prolific London organiser friends call the Don King of chess. Three separate tournaments, one a gargantuan 15-round affair, gave opportunities for GM and IM norms or Fide ratings. Raoof plans a similar multi-event festival in Oxford just before Christmas with the aid of a mysterious benefactor who has donated a £10,000 prize fund.

Jonathan Penrose, the record 10-time British champion, was a UCS pupil, while Britain's leading master of the 1950s, Hugh Alexander, lived nearby for some years. This time James Plaskett, the former British champion from Hastings, won the GM group with 11/15 while Simon Knott, a City fund manager, was first in the IM tournament where both he and Essex's Karl Mah, aged 17, achieved IM norms.

Final scores in the GM event were Plaskett 11, Kreiman (US) and Sashikiran (India) 10½, Hillarp-Persson (Sweden) 9½. Krishnan Sashikiran, aged 17, who made a big impression at the British championship, missed his second GM norm by one point but showed why Indian fans compare him to the great Vishy Anand.

**Krishnan Sashikiran (India) v Ron Burnett (US)**

**1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Bg5** Sashi likes this sharp system, which the great Boris Spassky also favoured in his youth. **c5 5 d5 b5 6 dxe6 fxe6 7 cxb5 0-0 8 Nf3 Bb7 9 Rc1 Qb6?!**

Black regains his gambit pawn but White's dark-squared bishop becomes powerful. 9 . . . a6 is more testing. **10 Bd2 Bxc3 11 Bxc3 Qxb5 12 e3 Qb6 13 Be2 d5 14 0-0 Ne4 15 Be1!** The right plan for such positions, preserving the strong bishop.

**Ba6 16 b3 Bxe2 17 Qxe2 a5 18 Nd2 Nxd2 19 Bxd2 a4** Black's plan of weakening the b3 pawn then ganging up pieces on it looks plausible, but misses a tactical point. **20 Bc3 axb3 21 axb3 Ra3?** Into the lion's den. Since Qxb3? would run into 22 Qg4, he should retreat 21 . . . Qd7.

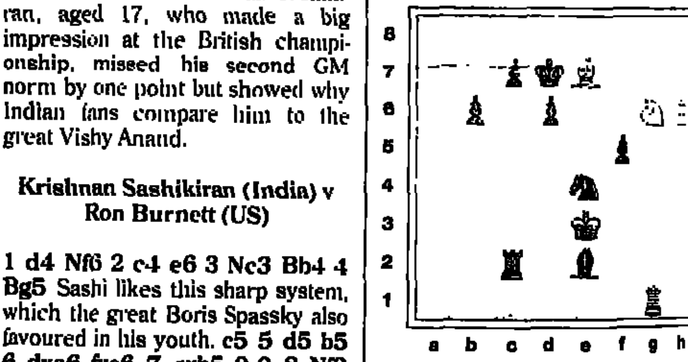
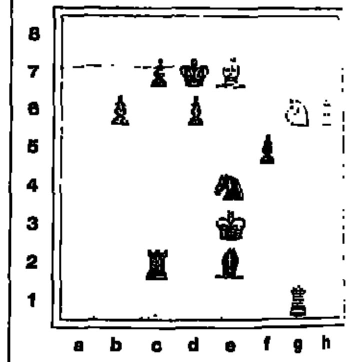
**22 Bxg7! Rf7** Of course if Kxg7? 23 Qb2+ wins. **23 Ra1 Qxb3 24 Be5 Nd7 25 Qg4+ Kf8 26 Bd6+ Resigns.** Impressive play; an Indian team of Anand, Sashikiran, Barua and Thipsay could aim high in the chess Olympiad.

There were also decisive miniatures in the Hampstead festival.

**Andrew Whiteley v Richard Palliser**

**1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nf3 Bg7 4 g3 0-0 5 Bg2 d6 6 0-0 c6 7 Nc3 Qa5 8 h3 Be6 9 Nd2 Na6 10 d5 Bd7 11 a3 Nc7 12 b4 Qa6 13 Bb2 b5 14 cxb5 Nxb5 15 Nxb5 Qxb5 16 dxc6 Bxc6 17 Bxc6 Qxc6 18 Nb3 Qd7 19 Kg2 a5! 20 Nxa5? Rxa5 21 Bxf6 Qb7+ 22 Kg1 Rd5 23 Resigns.**

No 2540

Endre Vegh v Simon Williams, Hampstead IM 1998. Black (to move) is three pawns up, but the h6 pawn is hard to stop. Slowly and carefully, Black withdrew his bishop to h5. Vegh looked suspiciously round the board, shrugged his shoulders, then pushed 2 h7. What happened next?

**No 2539:** 1 h5! Rg1 2 Kg2 g4 3 h6 Rb5 4 h7 and the pawn costs Black's rook.

## Quick crossword no. 435

**Across**

1 Eldest son and heir apparent of British sovereign (6,2,5)
8 Fruit — may be bolted! (3)
9 Flirt (9)
10 Passage — of power? (8)
11 Wine — shippers use it (4)
13 Shut (6)
14 Beat (6)
16 Poor — average (4)
17 Propaganda language of Orwell's "1984" (8)
20 Liveliness — of cartoon films? (9)
21 Part of play — passed by Parliament (3)
22 Trouble as consequence of an action (3,5,2,3)

**Down**

1 Alarm (5)
2 Questioning (13)
3 Overturned (8)
4 Prayer (6)
5 Sunderland river — erosion (4)
6 Florence Nightingale (4,2,3,4)
7 Layer (7)
12 Old joke — cracked at Christmas? (8)
13 Close — agreement (7)
15 Zodiac sign (6)
18 Pool — oat (5)
19 Crippled — but courageous (4)

**Last week's solution**

## Bridge Zia Mahmood

*AT THE* English Bridge Union's summer meeting in Brighton, two British teams played an exhibition match against the Australian national team and the Chinese ladies, who had won the silver medal in the World Championships last year. The most entertaining deal of the event was reserved for the match between the home teams.

Look at Tony Forrester's problem on these North cards:

♠AKJ10972 ♥84 ♦62 ♣K10

Your left-hand opponent opens with a preemptive three diamonds (the opponents are vulnerable, you are not). Your partner overcalls 3NT, which is natural but can have a very wide range — anything from an optimistic 16-count to a full-blooded 20 or more. Right-hand opponent bids four clubs, also natural. What call do you make?

With little room to explore, Tony was forced into a gamble. Since 4NT would be natural, he could not check for aces if he was going to bid a slam. Mindful that after the vulnerable opponents' preemptive tactics, there was a strong probability that a spade contract would run into some defensive ruffs, Tony put his money on a jump to 6NT. How did he do?

Well, his partner Paul Hackett had these cards:

♠863 ♥AKQJ97 ♦KQ5 ♣Q

Not everybody's idea of a 3NT overcall, but the bid has a lot of practical merit. There were plenty of tricks available in no-trumps but the opponents were in possession of two aces, so it looked as though Tony had lost his bet. But he hadn't, for this was the full deal:

North
♠ AKJ10972
♥ 84
♦ 62
♣ K10

West
♠ Q5
♥ 1065
♦ None
♣ AJ987632

East
♠ 4
♥ 32
♦ AJ1098743
♣ 54

South
♠ 863
♥ AKQJ97
♦ KQ5
♣ Q

Against 6NT by South West could cash the ace of clubs, but he had no way to reach his partner's ace of diamonds, and Paul Hackett claimed 12 tricks in short order. Minus 990 looked a revolting result for East-West, but there was better news from the other table:

| South | West | North | East |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jason | | Justin | |
| 3♦ | 3♥ | 4♣ | 4♠ |
| 5♦ | Dble | Pass | Pass |
| Pass | | | |

When the Hackett twins held the North-South cards, they had a rare misunderstanding. Jason Hackett interpreted his brother's bid of four clubs as denoting some diamond support, so he bid five diamonds over four spades hoping to make it. He didn't — he went four down doubled, so East-West at this table picked up 110 and 3 IMPs!

A word of advice. Should you ever be in the position of having to tell Tony Forrester that he has just lost points for bidding and making 6NT missing two aces, it's wise to do it by telegram.







**Rugby Union** Allied Dunbar Premiership One: Richmond 41 Newcastle 29

# Richmond sweep champions aside

**Robert Armstrong**

RICHMOND, vibrant and versatile, showed the positive face of English rugby with a roller-coaster performance that swept aside the champions and underlined their own Premiership ambitions. Six slickly worked tries, two of them by the flanker Robbie Hutton, exposed embarrassing gaps in the Newcastle defence which may shortly force owner Sir John Hall to reach for his chequebook.

It was the best possible pipe-opener for Richmond at their new home, the Madejski Stadium on the outskirts of Reading, which was filled with a crowd big enough (9,530) to suggest their bold decision to move there will be a success.

If Richmond, who bought shrewdly in the close season, can maintain the remarkable level of skill and control they achieved against Rob Andrew's muscular side, they should have no problem pulling in five-figure support once their community projects get into full swing.

Richmond's biggest assets are their international players, Ben Clarke, Spencer Brown, Allan Bateman and the Argentine scrum-half Agustin Pichot, all of whom revelled in Newcastle's discomfort, roared on by their delighted supporters. Sussing out the Tynesiders' weakness at scrum and line-out, Clarke's opportunistic side wasted no opportunity to exploit their opponents' hesitation with a searing break or surging drive to the line.

"One or two key players have left Newcastle and they have a lot of older men in their side," said John Kingston, Richmond's director of rugby. "Newcastle played the way I thought they'd play — we could have scored 50 points. They will have to rebuild and develop young players like Johnny Wilkinson to get things right."

Happy landing . . . Pichot dives over unchallenged for Richmond's second try PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID GIBSON

In fact, Wilkinson, one of the youngsters on whom Clive Woodward has pegged England's future, had such an ineffectual game that he was substituted near the end. In theory he was playing at flyhalf while Andrew wore the No 12 shirt; in practice frequent switching of positions between the two created midfield confusion which Richmond were happy to exploit. To make matters worse, Wilkinson's goal-kicking was so wayward that eventually Andrew took over the job.

Newcastle's captain Dean Ryan shrugged off the departure of Pat Lam, Alan Tait and Tim Stimpson, denying the club had been lethargic in seeking replacements.

He was candid about the reasons for his side's defeat, their second at the hands of Richmond this year. "The rules have changed and you just have to adjust," he said. "You cannot keep the ball now for long periods — you have to move it away from the tackle. Our scrum creaked and Richmond caused us a lot of problems."

Kingston, whose job was thought to be on the line last spring, pointed out that Richmond, a third division side three years ago, had probably made quicker progress than any of their rivals. "Last season our players experienced Premiership rugby for the first time but we still finished fifth. This time they'll know what to expect — the building blocks are in place and we'll aim to ask questions of the opposition."

Richmond's questions came from all quarters but they were especially lethal at short range, scoring four tries from set-pieces close to the line. First Clarke, then Pichot stormed over from five-metre scrums in the right corner.

Then, after Bateman had raced home to score from long range, the industrious Hutton twice touched down from a drive-maul when Craig Quinnell won line-outs in the right corner. Brown completed the agony for the visitors with a superb solo break.

Trailing 41-15, Newcastle ultimately saved their blushes with well worked scores near the end, courtesy of Inga Tuigamala and Doddie Weir. However no one, least of all Sir John, will have been fooled by that late flourish.

**Sports Diary** Shiv Sharma

## European super league plan is kicked into touch

CONTROVERSIAL plans by Media Partners, an Italian company, to form a breakaway super league of Europe's leading football clubs have been turned down by top British clubs. All 20 Premiership clubs rejected the proposals unanimously and agreed to seek change to European competitions through official channels.

The collective rejection came after a meeting between the club chiefs and Gerhard Aigner, Uefa's general secretary, who assured them that changes would be made to the three European competitions in order to guarantee participating clubs more money.

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR have parted company with their Swiss coach Christian Gross. Gross replaced Gerry Francis last November to revive the club's flagging fortunes but Spurs only just avoided relegation last season, and have had a poor start this term.

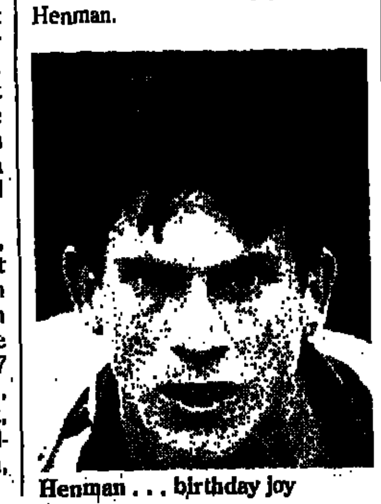
LIVERPOOL footballer Mark Wright admitted defeat in his year-long battle to overcome a serious back condition, forcing the former England international into retirement at 34. Wright made 601 senior appearances for his four professional clubs — Oxford United, Southampton, Derby County and Liverpool — and won 45 senior international caps. He is likely to move into coaching.

ESSEX off-spinner Peter Such is the surprise choice in England's 17-strong squad for the Ashes tour of Australia this winter. Such played the last of his eight Tests against New Zealand at Old Trafford four years ago. John Crawley has won the vote for the seventh batting spot ahead of Graeme Hick. Also in the party are his Lancashire team-mates Michael Atherton and Warren Hegg, the latter previous uncapped at Test level.

Kent seamer Dean Headley, dropped after the Lord's defeat against South Africa, has also been recalled. Surrey young guns, Ben Hollioake and Alex Tudor, have been handed places, too. The 17 are: Stewart, Hussain, Atherton, Butcher, Cork, Crawley, Croft, Fraser, Gough, Headley, Hegg, Hollioake, Mullally, Ramprakash, Such, Thorpe and Tudor.

DAVID LLOYD, the England cricket coach, was severely reprimanded by the England and Wales Cricket Board for his disparaging assessment of the Sri Lanka off-spinner Muthiah Muralitharan. Lloyd implied during the Oval Test that he still viewed Muralitharan as "a chucker", even though his bowling action had been passed as legitimate.

TIM HENMAN is Britain's No 1 tennis star. It was the perfect 24th birthday gift for the player who achieved it by reaching the last 16 at the US Open in Flushing Meadow — for the second time in three years. Greg Rusedski, 25 last Sunday, slumped to a third-round defeat and surrendered the top position to Henman.




Henman . . . birthday joy

AUSTRALIA'S Michael Doohan won his fifth 500cc San Marino Grand Prix at Imola — his successive victory on the circuit. The reigning world champion dominated the race and finished ahead of Alex Criville of Spain. Max Biaggi of Italy disappointed his home crowd by coming third. The result throws the championship wide open — Doohan is now only four points behind Biaggi, with Criville third.

THE South African Rugby Football Union elected its first black president, Silas Nkanunu, a human rights lawyer and the union's former vice-president. Mr Nkanunu was the only nominee for the post vacated by Louis Luyt in May.

MARK "Big Mac" McGwire booked his place in American baseball's hall of fame when he equalled the current record of 61 home runs in a season, set by Roger Maris in 1961. With 19 games remaining the St Louis Cardinals star, who has now gone one better than the legendary Babe Ruth, has plenty of time to set a new mark.

JACKIE BLANCHFLOWER, one of the survivors of the 1958 Munich air crash which killed eight Manchester United players on their way back from a European Cup match against Red Star Belgrade, has died of cancer. He was 65.

**Cricket** NatWest Trophy

## Derbyshire fail to stem Red Rose

**Mike Selvey**

**THERE is a rumour that NatWest would like a change to the current format of their final, which would involve two sides playing a game of cricket to decide who tosses a coin.**

**Once again, the September final, which is supposed to be a showpiece occasion, was reduced to a game of such one-sidedness that a watchdog body — Ofterik — might be needed to investigate unjustifiable use of the word "match". This was little more than a charitable donation to Lancashire bank accounts, and Derbyshire players should claim tax relief.**

**By 1pm last Sunday the Red Rose had secured a game that "because of inclement weather" did not even start until half past four on Saturday and finished for the day shortly after seven. In all, a total of 67 overs were bowled which makes it almost 20 overs shorter than the previous shortest final, which took place last year — itself five deliveries shorter than the year before that.**

**Lancashire's nine wicket success matched that of Essex last year, and was the seventh time they have lifted either this trophy or the Gillette Cup. On Monday they beat Hampshire by 16 runs to win the AXA League. Lying in third place in the county championship only eight points adrift of Leicestershire, they could yet turn a good season into the most astounding one in their history.**

**Although the start was delayed, the clammy atmosphere and low cloud meant that the toss would be crucial, but few could have anticipated to what extent. Derbyshire, who needed all the help they could get if they were going to compete, got none, except for some wild Lancastrian bowling in the opening overs after Wasim Akram predictably had sent them in to bat.**

**Instead, an improbable opening stand of 70 between Kim Barnett and Michael Slater was followed by a collapse of historic proportions that saw seven wickets fall for 11 runs against some superb swing and seam from Ian Austin and Peter Martin. In all, 10 wickets fell for 38 runs. The total of 108 is the lowest first innings in the final of this competition or its predecessor, and the second lowest for either innings. A target of 109 was never sufficient even to apply a modicum of real pressure on a side as streetwise as Lancashire.**

**Cork got some satisfaction by uprooting Michael Atherton's offstump with a dream delivery, but it merely served to bring Neil Fairbrother — making a record 10th appearance in a Lord's final — in to join John Crawley. Their unbroken second wicket stand of 81, from 20 overs, saw Lancashire home with virtually half their scheduled overs in hand.**

**The man of the match award went to Austin for his 3-14, rather than Martin who swung the ball alarmingly to take 4-19.**

